


UConn

MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2025





THE TIME: 7:45 IN Q4
THE CALL: AND-ONE
THE SCORE: UCONN 70
SOUTH CAROLINA 44
THIS. IS. HAPPENING.



FEEDBACK

Thank you, UConn Nation, for letting us know that you loved reading our Spring special issue as much as we loved creating it (I guess it's like childbirth — you forget the pain!). It was especially gratifying to hear that the 24-hour tour made you feel as if you were back on campus, whether your time here was a few years or many decades ago. Here's a small sampling of the torrent of web, social media, mailed, emailed, and phoned-in comments on that and on our Fall issue (much love for Dan Orlovsky).

Letters are edited for clarity and length. Join the conversation at magazine.uconn.edu or email me at lisa.stiepock@uconn.edu.



Dan Orlovsky Is All In

Reading the Dan Orlovsky article reminds me of one of the worst predictions of my life. After getting my

MBA at UConn, I was working for a cable TV company in Denver, Colorado. Bill Rasmussen, founder of ESPN, came to pitch us on his idea for a 24-hour sports network. I thought he was nuts. I grew up in Orange, Connecticut, and my father was a sports fanatic. My mother berated him for his infatuation with “those ball games.” I predicted ESPN would lead to divorces all over the country and fail.
Bill Fogarty '73 MBA
Alpharetta, Georgia

He's come a long way since having life-size posters in dorm rooms all over campus! I love seeing Dan on ESPN.
Gigi Bennett
Reston, Virginia

Great article...it highlights and emphasizes so many of the important things of life...
@arinluke2

“This War Mattered”

Humbled to be part of the Afghanistan War Commission, and proud to be serving with fellow Huskies Jaime Cheshire and Jeffrey Dressler. We hope to bring some degree of closure, answers, insights, and recommendations following 20 years of war in Afghanistan. Thank you UConn for featuring us this month in your magazine, but also for giving us the education and skills to be able to do our part in contributing to this country's national security processes.
Daniel P. Fata '94 (CLAS)
Washington, D.C.

Tom's Trivia

Gampel is closer to the old orchard than I remembered. Across Hillside Road from the orchard, extending to Hawley Armory, were the track, athletic fields, and tennis courts. Directly across from the apple building was the baseball/football field. On baseball days we would rush from the Storrs Grammar School to the field hoping to be J.O. Christian's batboy. I usually ended up chasing foul balls that ended up in the orchard area. I do enjoy the UConn Magazine!
Quentin Kessel, Professor Emeritus
Storrs, Connecticut

24 Hours at the University of Connecticut

I just finished reading the Spring 2025 UConn Magazine and felt compelled to tell you how much I enjoyed it, how beautiful it was, and how it unexpectedly moved me. You managed to capture the beauty, energy, bigness, and at the same time smallness, of that special campus. The images and beautifully written captions transported me back to my time at UConn. The concept for this edition was so unique and well executed.

I could go on, but I'll just say that it left me with a tear in my eye and warmth in my heart for the nostalgia of Storrs. Thank you for creating such a lovely product!
Meryl Gersz '14 (BUS)
Killingworth, Connecticut

What a terrific concept with dazzling creative content. The fabulous photographers captured campus life in all its myriad magical ways. And the pithy copy summarized how the UConn community innovates, creates, and exudes Huskyness (new word).
Meg Malmborg, former director of UConn's Lodewick Visitors Center
Hebron, Connecticut

This UConn magazine was the absolute best I've ever seen! Feelings of nostalgia and pride and a renewed desire to visit were overwhelming.
Dino DePellegrini '82 (BUS)
Stafford Springs, Connecticut

Each turn of the page brought a new slice of the overall UConn experience or a description of what's involved in maintaining the campus. Congratulations to the creative team that assembled this issue and especially to the photographers who captured the spirit of the messages.
Dave Armen '76 (CLAS)
Niantic, Connecticut

Just got the 24-hour magazine and wanted to say thanks — it was much needed in these days when so much of the news seems bad. Seeing all the photos and the richness that is a day at UConn was really uplifting and surprisingly emotional — so thank you for that! What a great idea beautifully executed.
Daniel D. Burkey '23 MA, professor and associate dean, College of Engineering
Middletown, Connecticut

The new issue of the magazine was captivating, interesting, so human, and brought back so much nostalgia for my alma mater and former employer, all of which is what the publication should do. Be proud!
John Sponauer '92 (CLAS), '10 MBA
Southington, Connecticut

This latest issue really brought on “the feels” for me. Even though it's been nearly 40 years since I graduated from UConn, all the cherished memories came flooding back while turning the pages. Granted, the landscape has changed significantly since I attended, however that Husky pride came flooding forth and brought me right back to my days at Storrs. Thanks for putting out such a great edition of a great alumni magazine. Once a Husky, always a Husky!
K.C. Hendricks '90 (CLAS)
Wilton, Connecticut

I spent more time with this issue than I have with any past issue, and I

found myself showing off various pages to my (non-Husky) husband with pride for the campus and for your work. I felt more connected to campus than I have in a long, long time thanks to you and your team. Brava, truly.
Melanie Deziel '12 (CLAS)
Raleigh, North Carolina

Oh, how it has grown. Loved it there — wind blew across campus when it snowed, and no buses or bus booths. A real memory!
Leslie (St. Germain) Watson '66 (ED)
Wethersfield, Connecticut

I graduated from UConn in 1978. I cannot believe how much the campus has grown. Holy smokes. It's beautiful.
Sharon Vartanian '78 (CLAS)
New Boston, New Hampshire

The 24 Hours at UConn is one of the coolest magazine issues I've ever read. Such a cool idea and so well executed. I read it to my 10-year-old son at bedtime and he loved it.
Matthew B. Carlson '07 (BUS), '08 MS
Westport, Connecticut

I just wanted to tell you how much many of us enjoyed the 24 Hours at UConn Magazine. It made us feel so good, we felt like we were back in time almost, and it just captured everything that we loved about UConn. This is something we will be saving.
Lorraine Valente '73 (ED), '79 MA
Windsor, Connecticut

If anyone in the world wants to understand the powerful magic of

Missed Connection

I am looking for the UConn alum in Michigan who honked at me several months ago, on I-94, who had a plate with UCONN 8. My plate is UCONN52.
William J. Vollano '52
Ann Arbor, Michigan

a 4-year university education, they should spend a minute with the latest issue of UConn Magazine. It was both enchanting and electrifying to read as the sun rose and set on a glorious institution. The beautiful photographs and spare but compelling prose spoke not only to the range of offerings at UConn, but to its quiet beauty, its raucous sprit, and its devotion to learning and community. Well done, UConn. A total triumph.
Deb (Pierson) Sawch '80 (CLAS)
Westport, Connecticut

I picked up a copy of the 24-hour issue. It is first-rate. Vicki raked through it this morning and thought it marvelous — she is acerbically and brightly critical of many publications, but she raved about the 24 hours. What a good idea and how well done. Samuel Pickering, Professor Emeritus
Storrs, Connecticut

Pickering was purportedly the inspiration for the teacher played by Robin Williams in “Dead Poets Society.”



Chris MacDonald
We used to take stacks of chocolate chip cookies from the dining hall and stuff them in our jacket pockets wrapped in napkins they were so good!



Checking in with

The Ace

Thank this UConn Trustee and All-American Husky hammer thrower for giving Connecticut its Travelers Championship.

For most of the year, UConn teams dominate the sports headlines throughout Connecticut. But that changes in mid-June, when the PGA Tour comes to town for the Travelers Championship, played at TPC River Highlands in Cromwell.

The roots of the tournament date back to 1952. Then known as the Insurance City Open, the 1956 title went to a young golfer named Arnold Palmer. Today, as a Signature Event on the PGA Tour, it attracts the best players in the world, with an annual prize pool of \$20 million — and as one of the top attended golf events in the country, raises millions of dollars each year for Connecticut charities. So you might be surprised to hear that it almost disappeared in the early 2000s due to a lack of corporate sponsorship.

Travelers stepped up to save the day, led by executive vice president and chief administrative officer **Andy Bessette '75 (CLAS)**. Since the beginning of the company's title sponsorship, he has partnered with tournament director Nathan Grube to deliver one of the best stops on the tour. A member of the UConn Board of Trustees, Bessette was a four-time All-American hammer thrower for UConn track and field. A record-setting win in the 1980 Olympic track and field trials earned him a spot on the 1980 U.S. Olympic team, and later that summer, he received the Congressional Gold Medal for his patriotism in supporting the boycott of the Moscow Olympic Games.

"As a world-class athlete, you learn quickly that if you accept the status quo, if you accept where you are skill-wise and competitively, then you are going to go backwards," Bessette told us on the eve of last year's Travelers

Championship from the clubhouse at TPC River Highlands. "You never ever stop trying to get better. That is what our rallying cry about the tournament has been for the past 20 years. We have a show for one week, but we work all year to plan to get everything right. And part of the week is taking a look around and making a list of things we can improve on for next year's tournament."

At the top of that checklist for Bessette and his team is making sure the players and their families and caddies all have a positive experience with the event — and that is a yearlong effort. "We have relationships with every single professional golfer in the world, and it doesn't matter where they are from or what tour they play on," says Bessette, referring to both the PGA Tour and the fairly new LIV Golf tour. "It's very important to establish a relationship with the families. I know Rory McIlroy, and I also know his daughter is Poppy. I know that Bennett is the son of Meredith and Scottie Scheffler. We send players a Travelers onesie whenever they have a baby. That's just the way we run things around here. We befriend the whole family, and these relationships will go on forever. People ask, Are you recruiting players for this year's tournament? I say no, we go out and see our friends. It's relationship building."

Bessette learned those skills at UConn, thanks to the way his coaches treated him. "The reason I love UConn is how people supported me when I was there and after I graduated. Coach (Bob) Kennedy was my throwing coach and John Toner was the athletic director, and they always encouraged me to come back to Storrs to train right up to my time as an Olympian. Coach Bill Kelleher was always supportive.

"As a world-class athlete, you learn quickly that if you accept the status quo, ... then you are going to go backwards."

There wasn't a lot of money those days for prospective Olympians, so it was tough, and they always were there."

He compares his UConn experience to when he gave a young, unknown golfer named Webb Simpson a sponsor's exemption to play in the 2008 Travelers. "Webb was so grateful for the opportunity and asked if there was any way he could thank us," says Bessette. "I told him not to abandon the Travelers when he became famous."

"Fast forward to 2012, and Webb wins the U.S. Open, which was played all the way out in San Francisco that year, and our tournament was the next week. And where do you think he was the next week? The Travelers Championship."

"The word of a person means the world to me," says Bessette. "That's what the people of UConn did for me. There was no money and little fame, but there was something — there was love and respect, and the school never let me down. The people there helped me every way they could, and that's why I give back to UConn to this day."

—MIKE ENRIGHT

Travelers recently added to a long history of funding UConn projects by helping UConn Hartford students pay for housing. The 2025 Travelers Championship takes place June 16–22.





IN DEVELOPMENT

WHAT TO WEAR IN A SHARK TANK

On a late January episode of ABC’s “Shark Tank” entrepreneurship competition, two of the show’s judges made a deal with Hayley Segar ’17 (CLAS). Veteran “Shark” Barbara Corcoran and newcomer Jamie Kern Lima offered Segar \$200,000 — and plenty of business expertise — in exchange for a 20% stake in her onewith swimsuit company, which has sold \$2.3 million in product since its creation at the end of 2021.

“To be successful on ‘Shark Tank’ is so incredibly validating,” says the New London native, who knew from the time she was a little girl that she would start a company. “I felt I was on a path to build something of my own.” Her late grandfather encouraged her to consider appearing on “Shark Tank” even before she had a business idea. In the final days of his life, she came up with her swimwear business concept

and shared it with him in the hospital. Segar says she knew instantly that onewith was going to succeed. “It hit me like a freight train. ... It was the best possible feeling. ... I think this is the story of every entrepreneur who loves what they’re doing.”

Her inspiration came after an exhausting search to find a flattering swimsuit to bring on a vacation to Miami. She wanted something that felt “one with” her body. When she couldn’t find it, she created it herself.

After earning her degree in English language and literature, Segar worked in the bridal industry and as a social media influencer. But she returned to her alma mater to present her idea to the entrepreneurial community.

She was invited to attend the 2020 Summer Fellowship Accelerator, a highly selective program of the Connecticut Center for Entrepreneurship

and Innovation (CCEI) — part of the School of Business — and received advice, mentoring, and \$15,000 in non-dilutive startup funding. With the help of experts at the accelerator, the UConn School of Law, and the Connecticut Small Business Development Center, Segar says she developed confidence in her abilities, as well as a network of business mentors and friends.

“Hayley is the type of founder that we dream of working with. She’s always eager to learn something new and thrives on being challenged,” says Michelle Cote, CCEI director of strategic partnerships and a longtime champion of Connecticut entrepreneurs.

“Hayley puts new knowledge and resources into practice immediately. She has earned every milestone that she has reached with onewith, and I can’t wait to see where she goes next!”

—CLAIRE LAFLEUR HALL



ON CAMPUS

TAKE TWO

The School of Pharmacy’s medicinal plant garden spotlights drugs derived from nature. From top: Beach rose, *Rosa rugosa*, produces antioxidant-rich rose hips; tansy, *Tanacetum vulgare*, helps heal wounds; coneflower, *Echinacea purpurea*, has antibacterial and antiviral properties; veronica, *Veronica officinalis*, calms skin diseases; and Saint-John’s-wort, *Hypericum perforatum*, treats inflammation.





HUSKY NATION

ALL TOGETHER NOW

That connection you feel with fellow fans at the game? It's even more powerful than you think.

Each time the Huskies win another championship, it is not just the team's performance that galvanizes UConn Nation; it is the collective experience of fans chanting in unison in Gampel or at Rentschler, celebrating together in the streets, and proudly displaying their UConn gear that forges a strong sense of community. By synchronizing our appearances, our actions, and — as my research team's studies reveal — our emotions, fandom compels us to act as one, look as one, and feel as one.

Growing up in Greece, I witnessed this deep emotional investment firsthand. Entire cities would come to a standstill before a football derby, with those not in the stadium glued to their televisions. I met couples who left their own wedding receptions early to attend a match, showing up at the stadium still dressed in their wedding attire. Scientific research shows that sports fans can identify so strongly with their team that they experience the game's emotional highs and lows as though they were playing the game themselves. One study shows testosterone levels rising among fans of the winning team and falling among those of the losing team. Those reactions can even be observed in the brain.

When a team of researchers placed Red Sox and Yankees fans in a brain scanner and showed them real games, they found that fans watching a negative performance by their team activated the regions of the brain typically associated with the

experience of pain. Correspondingly, their team's success triggered activity in an area related to the brain's reward system. Intriguingly, similar feelings of pleasure were elicited by watching their opponents fail.

And while the game itself provides excitement and fosters engagement, recent research suggests that the strongest connections among fans are often forged in the stands, through ritualized interactions that shape and reinforce collective identities.

My research team has been exploring these effects at UConn and beyond. In a real-life experiment, we used wearable technology to track the emotional responses of Husky fans over an entire basketball season. As they watched the men's and women's games live, either in the stadium or on television, we found that those in the stadium reported more meaningful experiences and felt a stronger sense of connection with other fans compared to those watching together on TV. These shared experiences even left

“We used wearable technology to track the emotional responses of Husky fans over an entire basketball season.”

measurable traces in their bodies: Fans in the stadium exhibited greater emotional synchrony, their hearts beating in unison. In fact, physical co-presence was the most important predictor of emotional synchrony overall, more so than any element of the game itself, such as its pace, outcome, or score difference.

As it turns out — scientifically — there's nothing quite like being in the Basketball Capital of the World during a game!

Building on this study, our team traveled to Brazil to investigate whether these effects extended beyond the game itself. We focused on a group of

fans participating in the Rua de Fogo (Route of Fire), a spectacular pregame ritual performed by fans of Atlético Mineiro. Before a cup final, these fans gathered outside the stadium to welcome their team's bus, turning night into day with thousands of flares and torches while chanting in ecstatic unison. Using the same wearable technology as in our basketball study, we found that this ritual generated emotional synchrony among the fans that rivaled even the most thrilling moments of the game itself. Remarkably, even the staff members aboard the bus exhibited similar patterns of emotional arousal, their hearts beating in unison with the fans'.

There are, of course, many reasons behind the widespread appeal of sports fandom. Like religion, sports are steeped in tradition, filled with symbolism, and bound by a strict sense of orthodoxy. Like politics, they showcase charismatic leaders and unite flag-waving crowds. And like art, they share a language for storytelling and

expression. But key to all this are the collective interactions that occur on the terraces and in the streets.

Our love for sports is as ancient as it is universal. Fanship taps into some of our fundamental evolved tendencies — our need to belong, to cooperate, to compete, to be part of something larger than ourselves, and, ultimately, to find meaning.

Just ask Husky fans in the student section at Gampel, standing shoulder to shoulder, jumping in sync, and belting out the UConn fight song. In those moments, being a fan isn't just about watching a game — it's about being part of something greater than yourself.

—DIMITRIS XYGALATAS

Dimitris Xygalatas is a professor of anthropology and psychological sciences and director of the Cognitive Science Program. He is the author of the award-winning book “Ritual: How Seemingly Senseless Acts Make Life Worth Living” and is working on a book about sports fandom.



THE DYNASTY LIVES

Apr. 6, 2025. Amalie Arena, Tampa, Florida There are 40 playing minutes left in the careers of Huskies Aubrey Griffin '23 (CLAS), Kaitlyn Chen '25 MS — and Paige Bueckers '25 (CLAS). Bueckers will be one of the all-time most decorated and beloved players to wear a UConn jersey whether she wins this game or not. But she deserves a national title. Her teammates want it for her. They want it for themselves, for this team they love, for these coaches they love (some of the time), for their bleed-blue fans, for this school that has won more women's basketball championships than any other — but hasn't cut down the nets since 2016.

12

In the past two March Madness weeks, this No. 2 seed has traveled 5,500 miles and faced five opponents, most recently besting No. 1 seed USC and overall No. 1 seed UCLA. They have been here — and just shy of here — before, but against injury hurdles too high for any measure of heart and soul, teamwork and effort to clear.

The NCAA tournaments ... these three weeks are kind of a culmination of what happened in the total picture. What happened to these kids last year when they came up short, and what happened a year before when some of them couldn't play, and the year before that when some of them couldn't play, and the year before that when some of them couldn't play. We have guys here that have not played as many games as they have played.

• GENO AURIEMMA •

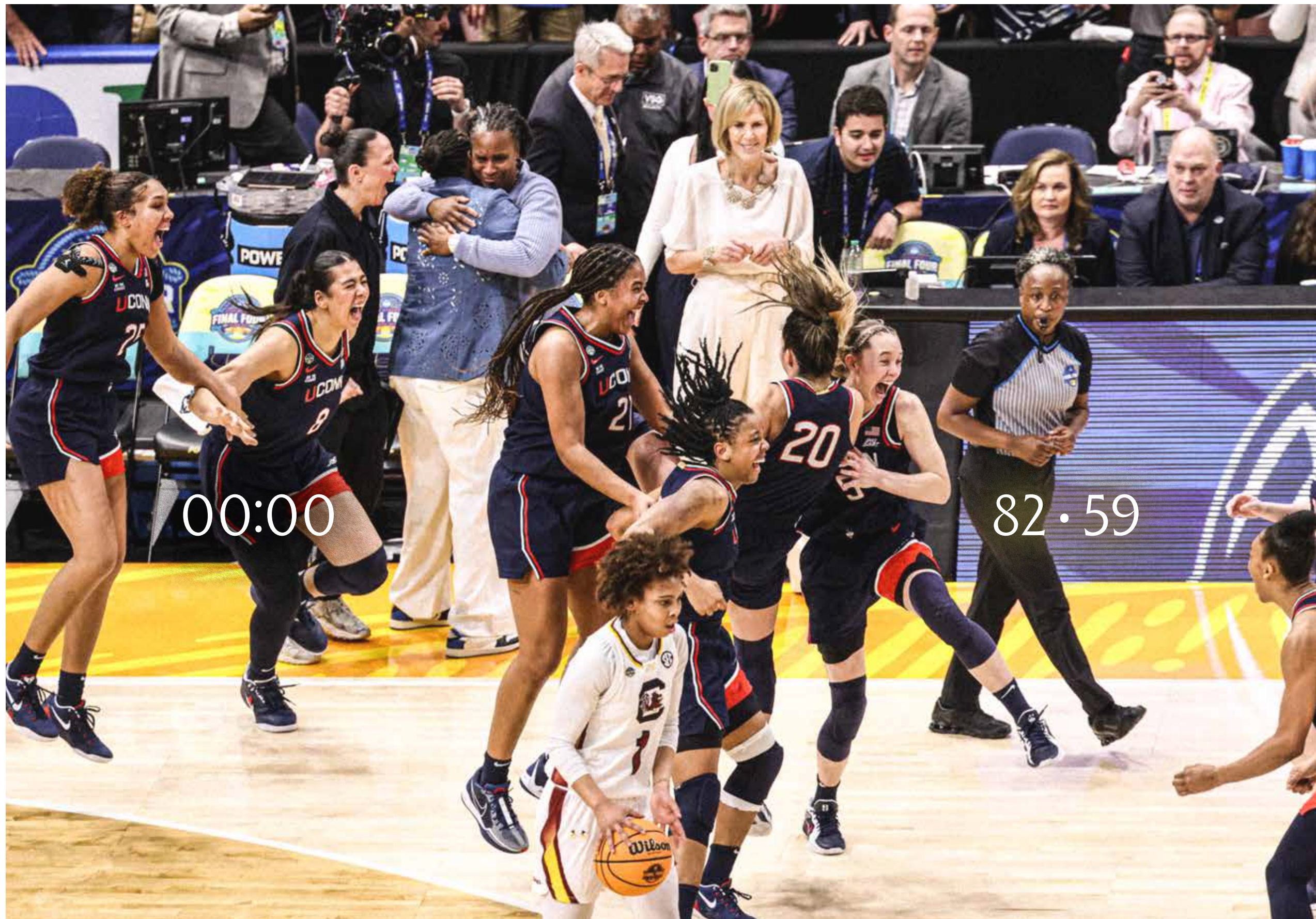
Now the only thing standing in their way is one final No. 1 seed — who else but defending champs South Carolina, another resilient, brilliant team of players from another epic program. This is meant to be a game of runs and lead changes, a whoever-has-the-ball-last-wins game. Both teams playing at peak. Both defensive and offensive powerhouses. Each with the talent to take it all. Two storied programs and head coaches ready for a battle that's anything but elegant.

Games of this magnitude come down to, How bad do you want it?

• ESPN'S ELLE DUNCAN •

For 40 minutes we give our whole souls.

• PAIGE BUECKERS •





BUECKERS



ARNOLD



STRONG

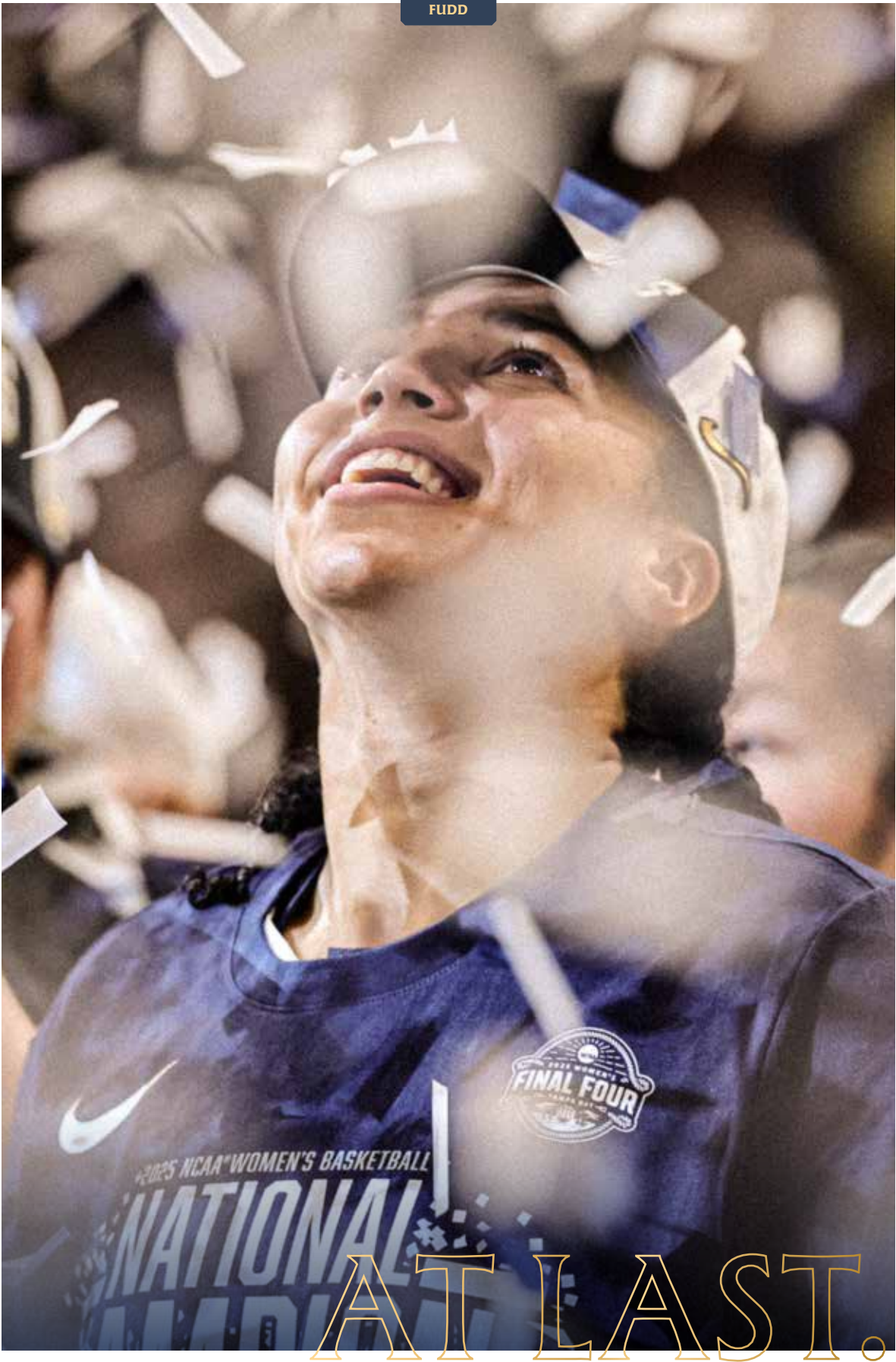


CHEN



SHADE

“Our mindset was just to be aggressive, stay locked in, stay aggressive, stay together — and that’s exactly what we did. AZZI FUDD ’23 (CLAS), ’26 MA



FUDD

It is clear from the tip off and crystallizes as the clock ticks each of those 40 minutes who wants it more. The Huskies are unblinking, locked in, suffocating on defense, showstopping on offense. Up by 5 at the end of the first, 10 at the half, 15 at the 30-minute mark, they quash every South Carolina run attempt with, as Auriemma says on “GMA” the next morning, “a quick bucket here by Azzi, a quick bucket by Sarah, Paige getting a loose ball and turning that into a layup, and you could see it in the other team that it was starting to get to them, the momentum that we were building — and then it just got outta hand.”

Their defense was exceptional. God, they were like an amoeba all over the court.

• ESPN’S HOLLY ROWE •

The players, with all of UConn Nation, finally let out a long-held breath with 7:45 to go in the fourth as Sarah Strong ’28 (CLAS) dishes to Bueckers, who gets the layup and the foul call, and the old-school three makes the lead 29. It’s clear they are bringing it home, and when Bueckers is nodded out for the final time as a Husky, she and Coach share a hug that brings many in the sold-out arena of 20,000 — and the 10 million more watching at home — to tears.

Paige has invested so much in this program, in the game of basketball, the emotions just came all pouring out and there wasn’t a whole lot to say ... I just told her, I said, “I love you.”

• AURIEMMA •

The clock is at 0. Final score: 82–59. Add this to UConn’s record-setting 34-point semifinal win over UCLA, and it is clear the reports were wrong. The dynasty is very much alive.

Auriemma tells UConn students at the welcome-home rally, “That’s three years in a row now that Connecticut basketball rules the world. And next year we’re going to make it four.”

THEY’RE BACK AND THEY’RE BETTER THAN EVER.

• ESPN’S ELLE DUNCAN •

THE ROAD TO TWELVE

A five-year arc that began in a bubble and ended with the Huskies once again hoisting the ultimate NCAA bauble was riddled with bad luck and injuries. Find even more at magazine.uconn.edu.



♦ APRIL 1 ♦

UConn makes 14th consecutive Final Four, beats defending champs Stanford 63–58.



♦ AUGUST 1 ♦

Bueckers suffers ACL tear in pickup game, will miss entire season.



♦ APRIL 2 ♦

1-seed UConn loses to 3-seed Arizona in Final Four 59–69 in an arena filled with cardboard cutouts.

♦ APRIL–MAY ♦

Paige Bueckers sweeps all four major player-of-the-year awards, the first freshman to win any.

2020-21

2021-22

♦ DECEMBER 5 ♦

Bueckers is injured in last 40 seconds of a win vs. Notre Dame, undergoes surgery.



♦ DECEMBER 9 ♦

UConn's loss to Georgia Tech is first to unranked team in 240 games.

♦ DECEMBER 20 ♦

UConn drops outside AP Top 10 for first time in 16 years.

♦ JANUARY 10 ♦

Aubrey Griffin has injury-related back surgery, will miss entire season.



♦ FEBRUARY 25 ♦

Bueckers returns in a 93–38 victory over St. John's.

♦ NOVEMBER 14 ♦

A broken thumb sidelines Juhász.

♦ NOVEMBER 27 ♦

UConn tops Caitlin Clark's No. 9 Iowa to win its third top-10 match in a month.

♦ DECEMBER 8 ♦

Mühl suffers concussion against Princeton.



♦ NOVEMBER 20 ♦

Associate Head Coach Chris Dailey faints before tip off, exits court on stretcher. Nika Mühl sets single-game Huskies assist record with 15 against No. 10 NC State.

♦ DECEMBER 4 ♦

Fudd injures knee, UConn falls to Notre Dame at home for the first time since 2013.

♦ DECEMBER 11 ♦

With four starters injured, UConn narrowly loses to No. 20 Maryland.

♦ MARCH 28 ♦

Elite Eight: UConn tops NC State in double overtime. Dorka Juhász fractures wrist, exits tournament.

♦ APRIL 3 ♦

Azzi Fudd falls ill before her first championship game. UConn falls to South Carolina 64–49 in its first men's or women's loss in 16 NCAA title games.

♦ OCTOBER 21 ♦

Ice Brady suffers a dislocated patella in practice, will miss entire season.

♦ JANUARY 8 ♦

UConn vs. DePaul is postponed as Huskies have six available players — one fewer than Big East minimum.

♦ JANUARY 15 ♦

Fudd reinjures knee against Georgetown.

♦ MARCH 4 ♦

Fudd returns for quarterfinal victory over Georgetown in Big East tourney.

♦ JULY 23 ♦

Jana El Alfy ruptures Achilles while playing for Egyptian national team, will miss entire freshman season.

♦ NOVEMBER 14 ♦

Fudd tears ACL in practice.

2023-24

♦ DECEMBER 18 ♦

Juhász and Mühl return to lineup. Coach Geno Auriemma falls ill minutes before tip off. The Huskies win 85–77, making C.D. 15–0 in Auriemma's absence.

♦ JANUARY 11 ♦

Fudd returns for 30-point victory over St. John's.

♦ FEBRUARY 8 ♦

Loss to Marquette follows Feb. 5 South Carolina loss — UConn's first back-to-back losses in nearly 30 years.

♦ JANUARY 3 ♦

Griffin tears ACL during third quarter of win over Creighton.



♦ FEBRUARY 16 ♦

Bueckers announces return for final year of eligibility.



♦ MARCH 9 ♦

Aaliyah Edwards exits quarterfinals of Big East Tournament with facial injury, misses rest of tourney.

♦ APRIL 2 ♦

Another depleted UConn roster regains its Final Four place over USC and freshman star JuJu Watkins.



♦ APRIL 28 ♦

Princeton grad Kaitlyn Chen transfers to UConn.

2024-25

♦ DECEMBER 14 ♦

Ayanna Patterson has knee surgery.

♦ JANUARY 23 ♦

Caroline Ducharme will remain sidelined to recover from head and neck injuries that have kept her out since fourth game of season.

♦ MARCH 2 ♦

Amari DeBerry enters concussion protocol, the sixth Husky out through end of season.

♦ JANUARY 19 ♦

Griffin returns to lineup in win against Seton Hall. Bueckers is fastest Husky to reach 2,000 career points (102 games).



♦ NOVEMBER 7 ♦

El Alfy returns to competitive play against BU.



♦ MARCH 25 ♦

Huskies celebrate Auriemma's 70th birthday with a 30th consecutive first-round win in NCAA tournament.

♦ APRIL 5 ♦

UConn brings Clark's Iowa Hawkeyes to the wire but falls short 71–69.

♦ MAY 15 ♦

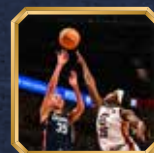
No. 1 ranked recruit Sarah Strong commits, joins No. 7 Allie Ziebell and No. 11 Morgan Cheli.

♦ NOVEMBER 20 ♦

Auriemma becomes winningest coach in college basketball history with win over Fairleigh Dickinson University. His overall record: 1,217–162. Fudd returns to lineup.

♦ FEBRUARY 6 ♦

UConn falls 80–76 to Tennessee in Knoxville. Auriemma will call this the season's turning point.



♦ FEBRUARY 22 ♦

Ducharme makes first appearance since November 2023 in win over Butler.

♦ APRIL 4 ♦

Huskies stun No. 1 overall seed UCLA 85–51 and earn another shot at ending their nine-year title drought.





“We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It’s easy to say, ‘It’s not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem.’ Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes.”
—Fred Rogers

In Mister Rogers’ view, **Michelle (Bussiere) Puzzo ’98 (SAH)** is a hero.

“Just help people,” says the co-founder, chief executive, and only paid staff member of UR Community Cares. “Just help people that say they need help.”

Talking in her office on the second floor of the Eastside Neighborhood Resource Center in Manchester, Connecticut, Puzzo is the consummate responder, offering solution after solution to problems faced by older adults who seek to age in place in a world where community is diminished, aging is stigmatized, and help is hard to come by — and expensive.

For decades after earning her bachelor’s in physical therapy, Puzzo provided in-home PT to older people

The Good Neighbor

By Julie (Stagis) Bartucca ’10 (BUS, CLAS), ’19 MBA | Illustrations by Kailey Whitman

after strokes, heart attacks, or surgeries. On most visits, patients would ask for something beyond the scope of her work — a hand with laundry, taking out the trash, or looking up a cleaning service on their smartphones.

“Many people were just living — and struggling to live — alone at home,” she says. Many couldn’t afford an aide or didn’t qualify for assistance programs. She saw it on a personal level, too, with her own grandmother who suffered from macular degeneration and dementia. For years, Puzzo mowed her grandmother’s lawn weekly and helped her with miscellaneous needs, pitching in as the entire family rallied to help Meme live her later years in her home. “She was so reliant on us. It’s hard on a family,” Puzzo says. “We’re just not set up socially to have these support systems.”

After Meme died in February 2019, Puzzo acted on the idea for UR (pronounced “your”) Community Cares, which had been gestating for a while. She registered her business with the state and set up a website; from there, it has been Puzzo waking up at 3 a.m. every day, tapping into resources, connecting with others who want to help, networking, marketing, and raising money to grow one person’s notion into a statewide organization of thousands.

Just before the pandemic hit, Puzzo created Neighbors Helping Neighbors, the signature program of UR Community Cares. Its secure online platform connects volunteers with people over age 70 (or those over 18 with a disability) who need help. Participants on both sides undergo background checks (“Just because you’re 80 doesn’t mean you’re a good person,” Puzzo says), and volunteers can’t do any licensed work, but requests for housework, transportation, yardwork, and companionship are fair game.

“The phone is ringing all day long

— insurance company denials, lack of community support, people not able to drive themselves home from a colonoscopy,” Puzzo says. “This really adds value to communities to be able to support people that aren’t able to pay for private caregivers or handy-men,” she continues. “The problem exists in every single town. The whole world is aging, and how are we going to handle it?”

Frank Jones, 77, of Madison, Connecticut, became friends with Puzzo after she did a presentation for seniors in a neighboring town. A disabled veteran who once worked as a health care administrator for a senior living and home health company, Jones has connected with a Neighbors Helping Neighbors volunteer who brings him to appointments and will drive him to an upcoming cataract surgery. Another dusts his home for him, after which they “sit down and have coffee and a good chat. She comes and walks to the beach with me and my service dog, Pinocchia.”

On Thanksgiving, they have a standing date for coffee at McDonald’s so that Jones doesn’t spend the day alone.

When his house, which has been in his family for four generations, caught fire in 2021, Jones says Puzzo was the first person to come down and help him. UR Community Cares helped in ways that other organizations he belonged to — or other aid organizations he expected would help — did not.

“I don’t know how she does it all,” he says of Puzzo, who juggles her work with being the single mom of two young boys. “It seems it’s been a perpetual thing with the elderly in this country not being treated as beneficial, worthwhile members of society. Michelle is trying to turn that around.”

“Just help people.

*Just help people that say
they need help.”*

Indeed, part of Puzzo’s crusade is combating stigmas surrounding older adults and providing them opportunities to age with dignity.

“People think that just because they’re older, they lack the ability or capacity to learn, and that’s just not true. They’re still working. They’re still an active part of their community,” Puzzo says. “They might be on committees. They might be volunteering.”

In fact, Puzzo was surprised that so many Neighbors Helping Neighbors volunteers are not the high school students she initially expected but rather retired people looking for meaningful ways to give back. At 84, the oldest volunteer loves to keep busy and offers rides to others. Another older volunteer joined the program in its first year and has given more than 900 hours. “People of any age have the

capacity to be better. But their basic needs have to be met,” says Puzzo.

To make real change, “You’ve got to start somewhere,” says Jones. “Even if you help just one person, you have to try.”

Check. In under six years, more than 950 volunteers have helped more than 1,000 members across 150 Connecticut towns, completing upward of 4,500 documented good deeds — and Puzzo knows the real number is even higher.

“People become friends, and they don’t put it in the computer anymore,” she says, half laughing. “They’re like, ‘Oh, Sally comes over.’ It’s great to see that people are becoming friends, but please put it in the computer.”

Those numbers help Puzzo do another thing she’s learned on the fly: write grants to secure money to grow the organization. Showing just how effective her programs are has gotten

UR Community Cares included in the human services budgets of seven towns and garnered local and national grants to start more programs — programs that connect people with technology education, recreation, and resources for the blind and vision-impaired.

Census figures show that America’s population is older than ever, and the country’s 65-and-over population is expected to grow from about 62 million in 2024 to 84 million by 2054, increasing from 18% of the population to 23%. At the same time, community has eroded to the degree that the former U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy in 2023 declared loneliness



Neighbors Helping Neighbors

An online portal connects volunteers with older people in need to provide companionship, transportation, housework, or yardwork.

4,500
good deeds

950
volunteers

1,000
community members
receiving services

150
Connecticut towns
represented



and social isolation an epidemic.

As systemic approaches to these problems grow more and more fraught, grassroots efforts like UR Community Cares help fill the gaps.

“Between budget and, more importantly, time, as a town organization we have to answer to our board of directors and act in the best interests of taxpayers, so change and growth take time,” says **James Costa ’20 (CLAS)**, recreation supervisor for the town of Manchester.

“To be able to have a group like UR Community Cares come in and pivot on the fly and look for those needs, supporting whatever is needed because they have that flexibility — it’s a really admirable thing.”

The town partnered with Puzzo, providing space to launch a tech center on the first floor of the Eastside Neighborhood Resource Center — a repurposed historic firehouse that houses division offices and offers public meeting space and community

programming.

“Our missions really align, we’re trying to serve underserved, marginalized communities,” Costa says. “They’re targeting a group that we haven’t had success bringing into our space. It was really just an organic fit, and a great resource to keep broadening the populations we’re able to serve.”

The UR Community Tech Center opened its doors in April 2024 and offers drop-in technology assistance hours, workshops, and classes on topics from AI to affordable home internet to digital tools for brain health — and that’s just a sampling of this past April’s schedule.

Volunteers and subsidized employees from a local job center run everything, and as with all else, Puzzo and her team keep coming up with more programming and more uses for the space. To help those, like Puzzo’s Meme, who struggle with vision impairment, the organization launched

UR Vision Resources.

Kristen Dockendorff, 64 and legally blind, came to the tech center last year for help setting up recurring payments for her home heating bill and to learn about new assistive technologies. Puzzo told the retired art teacher, who lives in Manchester, about the low-vision center she wanted to start. They worked together to decide what equipment would be most useful for people at the tech center’s new UR Vision Station. This March, Dockendorff led the organization’s first support group for the vision impaired.

“I wanted something to be involved in. I was a teacher for 32 years. I loved doing that. Once a teacher, always a teacher,” says Dockendorff, who was diagnosed at age 6 with retinitis pigmentosa, which causes progressive vision loss. “There was a need for another support group in this area. It gives me a place to feel useful.”

•

Inspired by her past patients, her grandmother, and the people she continues to meet through her work, Puzzo is brimming with ideas.

Case in point: To combat loneliness and get people out into nature, UR Community Cares raised money recently to buy a rickshaw and establish a local chapter of Cycling Without Age, a global organization that aims to get people outside and into the community for a bike ride.

As she looks out the window over the community gardens outside her space in the neighborhood resource center, she riffs on more ideas — students walk this way to get home from the high school, so maybe they can volunteer after school in the tech center, or perhaps we can adopt a few garden beds for another new program,

*“What we’re offering is
this new idea of serving
the community,*

**serving them at
home, serving them
where they are.”**

and build other things for people to do to serve our community based on their interests ...

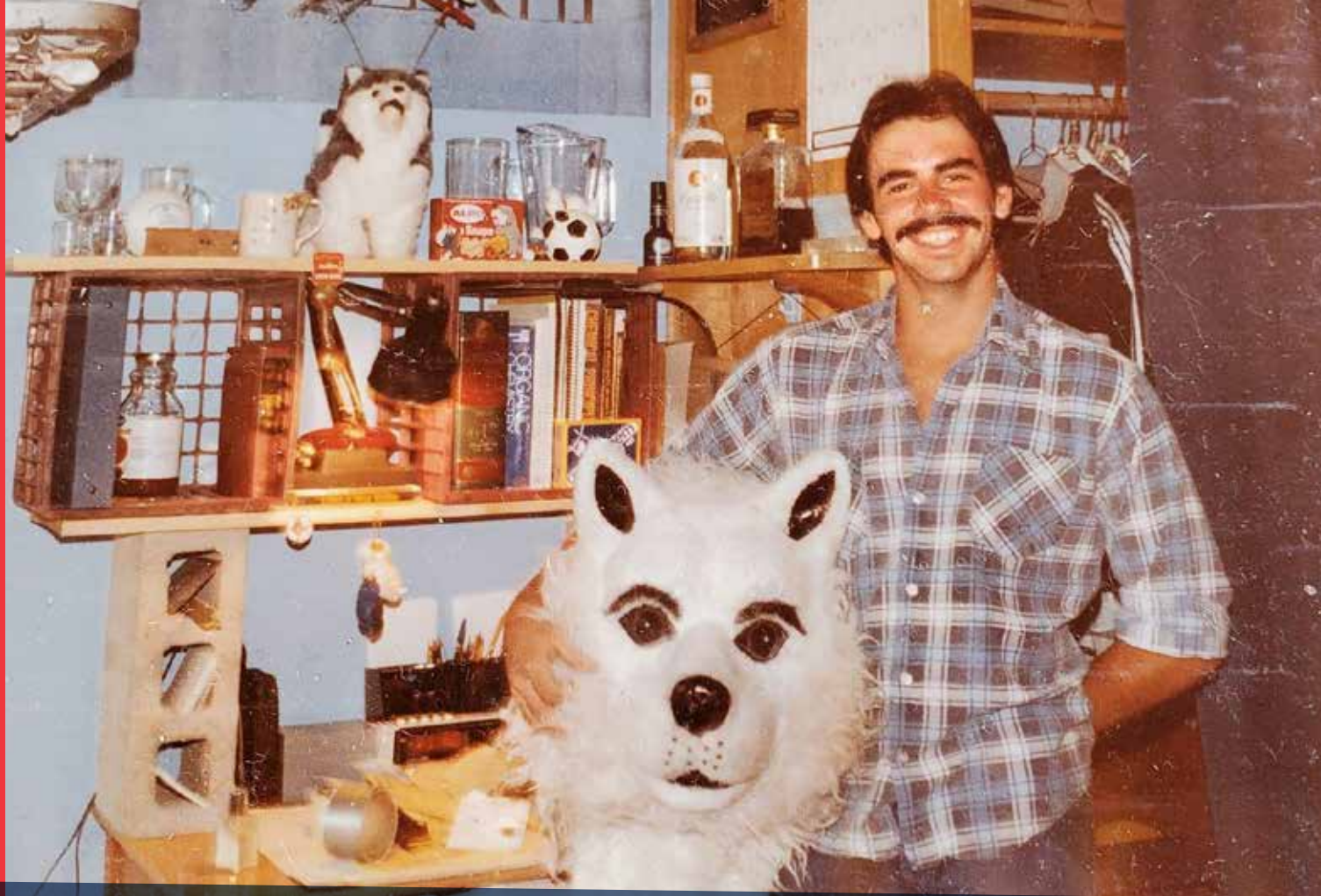
But that’ll come. Today, two long-time volunteers who happen to be UConn alums — **Donna (Oldakowski) Powell ’79 (CLAS)** and **Steve Couture ’90 (ENG)** — are running a tech center event in a half hour, and Puzzo has to work on some website updates. She’ll be up at 3 a.m. to start all over again.

“This is all a passion for humanity,” she says. If anyone is skeptical or asks why she’s the person to do this work, “I just block it out and keep going forward. I just knew there was an opportunity to do something that I really felt was needed. It’s common sense. When you look at programs the state offers, it’s so limited. When you look at what insurance offers, it’s so limited.

“What we’re offering is this new idea of serving the community, serving them at home, serving them where they are.” ☺



*Puzzo
and Meme*



BEING JONATHAN



By Craig Burdick
'96 (CLAS), '01 (ENG)



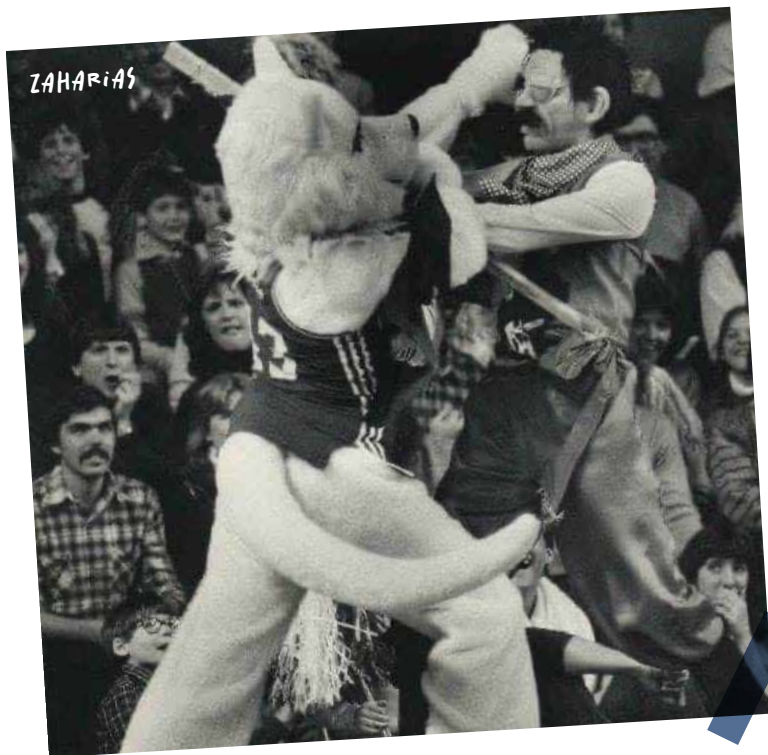
Everyone knows mascots can't talk — even our beloved Jonathan the Husky. Their identities are a closely guarded secret.

But all bets are off upon graduation. Turning the tassel loosens the muzzle, and former mascots are free to speak about their experiences.

A dozen alumni sat with us and shared their stories of being Jonathan. From heartwarming to face-pounding, Jonathan has seen and done it all over 60 years. And while he never started a fight, he finished a few.

"I mean, let's face it, it's a crazy kind of thing to do," says former Jonathan Joe Briody '86 (BUS), '95 MA, '96 Ph.D. "It's a very unique role to play on campus."





“It’s kind of funny because you see behind us that people are realizing, ‘Oh, this is for real. This is no longer a fake mascot fight,’” says Nick Zaharias of his infamous row with the Seton Hall Pirate, pictured at left. Zaharias is seen on the previous spread, his Jonathan head in hand.



John Briody in “Operation Huskectomy”

Fight, Fight, Connecticut

They say it’s all fun and games until someone loses an eye. With the Seton Hall Pirate already sporting an eye patch, he could almost be forgiven for not seeing what was in store after provoking our mascot in the Field House.

It was 1983, and **Nick Zaharias ’85 (CLAS)** and the Pirate had agreed to perform a fake fight at one end of the basketball court. *Fake.*

“If you notice in the photo, he had the Seton Hall flag in our gym, which he shouldn’t have been doing to begin with. He had it on a piece of lumber and he came up unannounced behind me and hit me on the back of the head. He actually cracked the Husky dog head.

“I immediately turned around and grabbed him and said, ‘What are you doing? This wasn’t our plan.’ And he said, ‘I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to hit you that hard.’”

Zaharias walked away — but then the Pirate hit him again, this time even harder.

“That’s when I kind of lost it. I’m like, well, that’s it. This is our turf. This is not going to stand.

“So I turned around and just started throwing punches and then he started throwing punches, but he had a rubber mask on and I had the big head. I think I took the flag off and threw it in the crowd. The crowd went nuts.

“And then I walked away like Rocky.”

That is, until the next day when then-athletic director John Toner called Zaharias to his office.

“He said, privately, ‘That was pretty cool. You protected the pride. But I gotta do something.’ So I had a little punishment. I think a friend had to be the Husky dog for one game or something like that.”

A couple of years later, **Ray Shaw ’86 (CAHNR), ’02 MS** took down the St. John’s mascot during a men’s basketball game in the Hartford Civic Center.

Late in the second half, with the visitors beating UConn badly, the opposing mascot approached Jonathan and suggested some lewd and unprintable theatrics. Shaw, knowing the crowd was watching, pushed him away with an exaggerated double hand wave.

“Then he comes over to me and reaches his hand out like, ‘Oh, I’m

sorry.’ So I go to shake his hand and he grabs me, and I say to myself, ‘This is it. It’s on.’”

With the St. John’s mascot pulling on the securely tied Husky head, Shaw wrestled him to the court, where they rolled beneath the basket until referees separated them. Shaw, still on the court, looked up — and straight into a video camera piping the whole thing into the Jumbotron.

“I did the first thing that came to mind: I put my arms up in a double bicep flex, and the crowd went absolutely nuts.”

The next morning, like Zaharias before him, Shaw found himself in John Toner’s office. Shaw was also suspended for a game.

To the Foe

Stealing the mascot was a thing among college rivals back in the day, whether it was the live animal or the human counterpart. Yale had come close to kidnapping the costumed Jonathan at least once.

In 1980, UMass succeeded — sort of. Weeks before a UConn-UMass foot-

ball game, the opposing band learned the identity of Jonathan the Husky: **John Briody ’82 (BUS)**, Joe’s older brother. “Operation Huskectomy” (their title) involved UMass students impersonating Harvard Medical School researchers and concocting a phony study into the personality and behavioral traits of mascots. The day before the game, a video crew visited Storrs and interviewed Briody for half an hour in The Suit as he greeted students and fans. When the “researchers” suggested they celebrate their collaboration at a bar, Briody, knowing he couldn’t have dinner in costume, left The Suit in the car of the “Harvard researchers.” Minutes into dinner, the hosts dropped the act:

“Right about now, your Husky costume is crossing the state line of Massachusetts, and it’s on its way up to the University of Massachusetts,” Briody recalls them saying, and they gave him a choice: You can go back to your dorm, tell the cheerleaders what happened, and ride with them to the game tomorrow with nothing. Or you can come to UMass with us tonight and party with the band as we watch your video. Briody chose option two.

“I got literally and figuratively taken for a ride,” he says.

It’s Vict’ry

Briody more fondly remembers the match that sent the men’s soccer team to the 1981 NCAA championship game.

“I went up to the athletic director [Toner again], who was sitting on the sidelines, and I was pleading with him,” says Briody. On his knees in the costume, Briody “was begging him. He knew I was asking if I could go to the game without saying any words. And he looked at me and he said, ‘Come up to my office on Monday morning and we’ll talk about it.’”

On Monday, Toner said yes. So Briody flew to Palo Alto, California, and cheered his Huskies to their first men’s soccer title.

Before Storrs could become the Basketball Capital of the World, UConn had to win its first hoops championship.

Few people can say they had a better view of the 1995 women’s basketball title game than **Bryan Garver ’97 (CLAS)** as Jonathan. In the closing

minutes, Garver remembers being directly in the field of vision of **Carla Berube ’97 (CLAS)** as she shot pivotal free throws.

“I put my head down, kind of crouched down so she couldn’t see me because my worst fear was that she was going to miss the free throws,” says Garver.

“That we were going to lose the game and in the press conference she was going to say, ‘That damned mascot distracted me, and I couldn’t hit the free throw.’”

Tom Murawski ’09 (CLAS) lucked out and wore The Suit for two big games: UConn football’s win in the 2009 International Bowl in Toronto, Canada, and the women’s basketball NCAA championship three months later in St. Louis.

In St. Louis, the Huskies won their sixth national title, and Murawski was swept up in the dizzying pace of celebration that lasted through the rally at Gampel Pavilion the next afternoon. “I don’t remember the bus really hitting the brakes between Bradley Airport and Gampel,” says Murawski. “We had a nonstop police escort.”

As they approached Storrs, everyone



on the bus wondered: Would the Exit 68 sign include last night's title? "I remember everyone looking out the window to see whether or not it was updated — and it was!"

What's better than a police escort? How about getting chauffeured to shoot a commercial.

A native of Perth, Australia, **Greg Waddell '02 (CLAS)**

tried out to be Jonathan because he loved American collegiate culture. "One of the things that makes it special is sports and competition and the camaraderie that comes with that," Waddell says. And besides, "the Husky is a friendly mascot."

Waddell remembers getting picked up "in a limo from the old Kappa Sig house on Gilbert Road by Arjona early one morning and being flown first-class to Atlanta for an ad for Marriott Hotels," says Waddell. "The theme was 'checking in to the Final Four,' and I was alongside three other mascots."

Waddell's Jonathan also starred in a TV spot for ESPN Zone restaurants.



Promotional appearances have taken Jonathan all over, including to check in to a pet-friendly hotel room (under the alias Greg Waddell) with other mascot buddies in a Marriott TV spot.

"You were really part of it, and you were included. It was really special," says Waddell of the mascot's role in the 2000 women's basketball title. That's his championship ring pictured above.

Let's Go!

Few things are as synonymous with Jonathan as the Husky Slide. While it's now banned (apparently due to safety concerns), nobody seems to know who invented it — although we found at least two people who claim credit.

"I joke with people that I started the Husky Slide because I couldn't get a grip on the floor if I ran out to do a cartwheel," says Ray Shaw (of flex-cam fame).

"I definitely did it in every game. You might talk to another Husky dog who did the Husky Slide, but I go back

to '84, and until someone claims it from before me, I'll say that I invented it."

Meanwhile, Shaw's classmate Joe Briody swears it was his idea. He performed his favorite Slide at Madison Square Garden.

"One of the camera guys that used to kneel underneath the hoops to film the game for TV came over and said, 'Hey, at some point can you do the Slide? I want to get it on video,' and I was like, 'Of course.'"

When the time came, Briody ran to the opposite end of the 92-foot-long court and started charging toward the cameraman.



One perk of donning The Suit? Love letters from young Husky fans, like the one, left, given to Zaharias, and the "really awesome" drawing handed to Harrison, top left.

"At the top of the key I jumped, and I hit the slide. And I'm sliding across the court and I'm looking out these eyes and I realize I'm going kind of fast, I don't have any control. Well, I bowled right into the cameraman and flipped him over on his back. And we're fumbling around and I'm trying to get off of him and I broke code and I said, 'I'm so sorry!' And he goes, 'No, I got it all! That was the greatest!'"

For the White and Blue

Jonathan's face is locked in a smile while the face of the person inside is hidden from view. That's a good thing

when fighting, but it can get in the way of conveying heartfelt appreciation. For a decade, **Tom Harrison '16 (BUS)** has cherished a drawing from a young fan.

"I think it might have been a 6-year-old that came over and said, 'Hi, Jonathan. I love you so much,' and gave me the picture," recalls Harrison. "I couldn't say, 'Thank you so much,' but I gave him a big hug. Then I handed it to a cheerleader and whispered: 'Please make sure you hold on to this because this is really something special. Like, really awesome.'"

Children also loved Joe's daughter **Caitlin Briody '17 (CLAS)** when she

suited up for casual campus events and meet-and-greets. "I remember being swarmed by a huge group of elementary school kids who were so excited to meet Jonathan," says Briody. "They were pulling on the tail and trying to stick their hands in the mouth. They truly didn't realize there was a person inside! It was a challenge to manage all that attention playfully and silently — without laughing."

Perhaps there was another reason kids were drawn to her. "I'm shorter than most mascots and smaller than The Suit is designed for. That made it challenging to move in The Suit," she says. "I was too short to see out of the eyes, so all my vision was through the mouth. I was always nervous that people would see me and feel cheated, like they weren't getting the 'real' Jonathan."

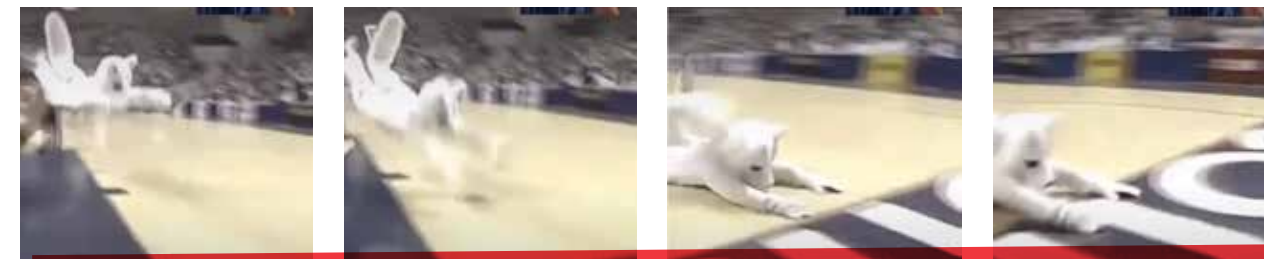
It turns out her slight stature made her stand out in an unexpected way.

"I can't tell you how many times people saw me and yelled, 'It's a puppy!' They thought it was really cute. They were happy to meet Jonathan in whatever version he came in. That meant a lot to me."

Hugs, fist and hip bumps, and of course high-fives are standard Jonathan love language.

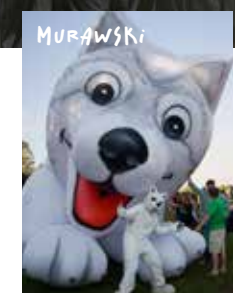
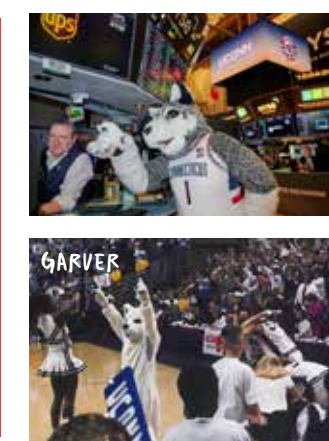
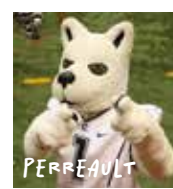
"My wife [**Meredith Trotta '92 (CLAS)**] and I had our first date when

HUSKY SLIDE





For more info and more photos, go, fight, go, fight, go, fight, go to magazine.uconn.edu.



"It allowed you to be this whole other persona, or to exaggerate your existing persona, you know, in the safety of a suit," says Joe Briody, above as Jonathan.

I was a senior," says **Dan Parzych '93 (CLAS)**. "She was animated and talking with her hands. At the time I was doing so many events as Jonathan and doing so many high-fives that we're sitting across the table and she's talking and I keep high-fiving her because my brain just keeps doing high-fives."

"She loves telling that story, too, about how it's probably still my personality, but it's not engineered into my nervous system anymore to high-five everybody all the time."

Maybe not. But it's definitely still his personality.

Over the course of a 30-minute video chat, Parzych, wearing a Husky Slide T-shirt, grew more animated and more amped up the longer he spoke about his time as Jonathan.

I am, and it's been 30 years. There's nothing like that."

Symbol of Might

Matthew Perreault '11 (CLAS) earned his master's degree at Louisiana State University and drove to New Orleans when the UConn football team visited Tulane in 2014 or 2015. In search of tailgating, he found a UConn tent and chatted up the 60-something fans. It somehow came up, as it often does with mascots, that Perreault had been a Jonathan — and a fan's eyes lit up.

"Oh, yeah," Perreault recalls the guy saying. "I brought my daughter to a basketball game for her birthday and she met Jonathan."

"And I'm thinking, that was during my time as the mascot. And I'm like, I remember that game, I remember meeting her. We were going through the concourse at the exact same time, and he said they had just gotten some concessions and then said it was the girl's birthday."

"To put that together and see the impact it had. It was something they

remembered, and it happened four or five years prior. It was so cool."

A year ago, when his son was considering colleges, Bryan Garver — who had felt the heat in the moments before Berube iced a game — brought his family from Colorado to a UConn-Notre Dame women's basketball game in Gampel.

After the game, says Garver, "My son told my wife: 'I get it now. I couldn't really understand why the mascot was such a big thing, but watching the mascot here, and watching how the crowd interacts with him, I get it.' That was quite a moment when I heard that my son said, 'My dad was kind of a big deal.'"

After all, being Jonathan is like being a superhero.

"It's really special because you're not you when you're the mascot, you're something more," says **Patrick Briody '20 (CLAS), '21 MS**, who was the fourth in his family to wear The Suit, following his uncle John, father Joe, and sister Caitlin. "It's special because you can take off The Suit and pass it down, and no one's ever gonna know. But that symbol is still going to be there. It's like Batman." ☺

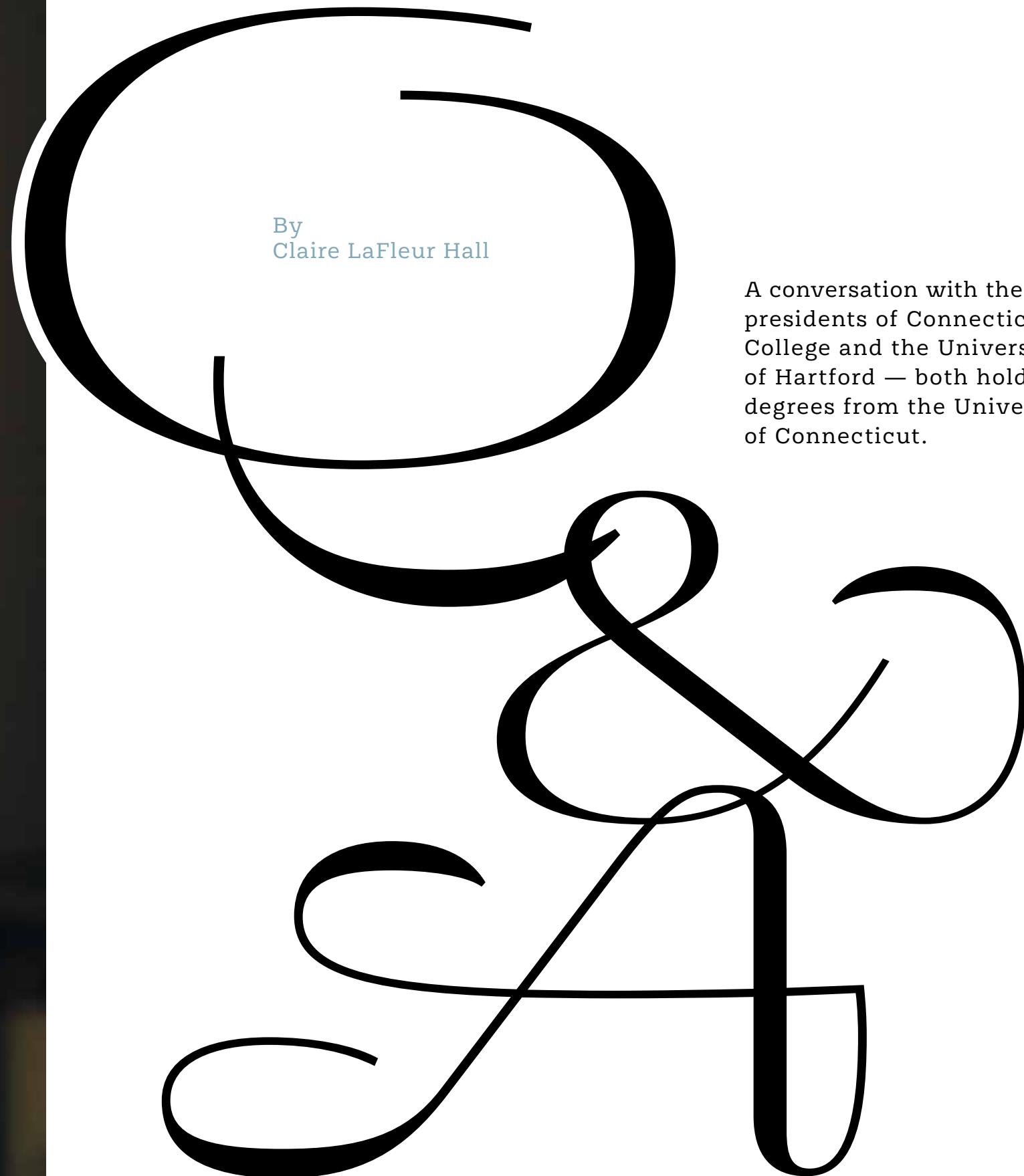
☺ All contributed or UConn except p. 27 locker room Albert Dickson/Hartford Courant, p. 27 skydiving David Gerstein, and p. 28 Husky vs. Terrier Boston University Photography



· Andrea Chapdelaine ·

By
Claire LaFleur Hall

A conversation with the new presidents of Connecticut College and the University of Hartford — both hold degrees from the University of Connecticut.



It took only a few minutes for **Lawrence Ward '92 (BUS)** and **Andrea Chapdelaine '91 MA, '93 Ph.D.** to develop a friendship over, of all things, the construction of Gampel Pavilion.

As Huskies in the late '80s to early '90s, they didn't know each other, but both lived close to the stadium and watched it being built prior to its 1990 grand opening. Chapdelaine describes watching construction workers eat lunch through the windows of her dorm. Ward vividly recalls chanting U-C-O-N-N with Big Red during the inaugural basketball game — when the UConn men beat St. John's 72–58.

"In those days you could walk into the games without a ticket," Chapdelaine says, moving on to Memorial Stadium memories. "My friends and I always went to the football games — to be *seen*," says Ward, laughing.

In a fateful twist, these two higher education leaders returned to Connecticut to start new jobs last July.



Chapdelaine, above, says spending time with students refills her "gas tank." Ward, top, seeks student time when he wants to "lean into the joy" of a job that provides no shortage of challenges.

Ward left Babson College in Massachusetts to become president of the University of Hartford; Chapdelaine left the presidency of Hood College in Maryland to lead Connecticut College.

Although they'd been introduced once at an event, this virtual interview is the first chance they've had to get to know each other, sharing their views of higher education from the top and the ways they try to balance tremendous responsibilities with some serious fun.

Q: What drew you to Connecticut? Was it more than the job?

Chapdelaine: I was in my ninth year as president at Hood and was committed to several more. But I had taught at Trinity in the past, and I loved the similarities at Connecticut College, and also the distinctions. I felt I could do well here, and coming to Connecticut was a bonus. I'm only about an hour from my hometown of Chicopee, Massachusetts, and my husband is from that area too. It's really nice to be close to family again.

Ward: There is something special about coming home. My family lived in Hartford since the 1940s. My father escaped the Klan in deep Georgia, and Hartford became his landing place. So for me, it is powerful to come back to the place that was a refuge for my father. The city provided refuge and new beginnings for both of my parents. My mother came to Hartford as a young girl after her father died. My grandmother worked for the Hartford Electric Company here as a chambermaid. I had some of my grandmother's HELCO service pins made into cufflinks and wore them at my inauguration.

Q: When people ponder whether higher education delivers ROI, what do you say?

Ward: There's no question college offers *enormous* return on investment,

from a financial standpoint to career opportunities to a society with greater prosperity and innovation. I think that what concerns people is that higher education has been slow to adapt to an evolving marketplace. We need to be far more innovative and build from the learner in rather than from the faculty member out.

Chapdelaine: I get asked that a great deal, and the answer is that data supports the decision to attend college. As a college graduate, you'll earn more over your lifetime, you'll be healthier, less likely to divorce, and more civilly engaged.

But I think when people ask that question, they're looking for reassurance that the investment is worth it, and that colleges are thoughtful about those concerns. Data only gets us so far. We need to do a better job telling our narrative. I think that question requires attention and caring, not just a one-size-fits-all response.

Ward: My son started at NYU during COVID, and one day he called me and said, 'I don't want to go to college anymore.' I said, 'You do know what I do for a living, right?' He was studying photography and just didn't see the value.

We have to be aware of how we deliver a college education and prepare students for careers. I told my son that we would support the path that he felt was right for him. When he is ready for more formal education, there will be plenty of opportunities for him to pursue it — including at the University of Hartford!

Q: So how do you keep college contemporary and impactful in a world that is changing so quickly?

Ward: I come from Babson College, which is known as one of the most entrepreneurial, innovative colleges in higher education. I see a future that is increasingly more learner-centric, perhaps courses and degrees of shorter duration, more just-in-time learning that purposely impacts lives. For



· Lawrence Ward ·

“Education, and life, are not passive experiences.”

example, I think for an emotionally mature learner with a clear career objective, a 90-credit-hour bachelor's degree completed in three years makes good sense. It would be a more attractive option academically and financially for many students and families.

Chapdelaine: The only thing I'd add is that to the extent we're able to, we need to empower students on their pathway. So many times they pick a major based on something they've seen on TikTok or what their parents see as a fit for them. I tell students to follow their passion, get excited, learn how to learn, ask questions, and find answers. That leads to deeper learning and richer experiences outside the classroom. The goal is to develop leaders who are intellectually courageous, inventive, resourceful, and resilient problem solvers.

Ward: It isn't career prep versus liberal arts. Experiencing multiple disciplines enhances everything you do. The older you get, the more you realize the importance of making those connections.

Chapdelaine: Exactly! I didn't major in college presidency. I like to talk about what got me here. I tell my students these things to help them feel empowered to pursue their passion and the career will follow. They shouldn't just be looking at earning ratios for the major. [Chapdelaine majored in psychology and justice studies; her master's and doctorate are in social psychology.]

Ward: We have a new accounting director who studied music at University of Hartford, earned an MBA, and then went into accounting. He comes to our university with a great appreciation for everything we do here.

Q: What is your favorite memory from UConn?

Ward: I have so many! As an undergraduate student, I experienced a lot of firsts. I fell in love, attended my first real party, worked as a business communications teaching assistant

for professor Minerva Neiditz, served as vice president of the undergraduate student government, spoke at admissions events. I had a lot of light-bulb moments.

Chapdelaine: As a graduate student, I had a different experience. We were a small group of about 10, and we were very tight-knit. We enjoyed talking about our interests, and the faculty were amazing.

The first course I taught was Intro to Psych for Honors students. I realized that teaching could be a path for me. That was the moment I said, 'This is how I'm going to impact the world.' UConn played a big role in my career and my life. The faculty set me on a path to success, and I am really grateful.

My husband and I also had our first date at Willington Pizza. We went back recently and it hadn't changed at all — and the pizza was still as good as I remembered it!

Q: And the best lesson you took with you from UConn?

Chapdelaine: I learned how to be an advocate for myself. I wasn't even 22, I was young, short, female, and on the shy side. I had to learn to say what I wanted. I learned to grow into my own, to develop confidence that I had something to contribute, not be passive about my destiny — and demand a piece of the pie. The change over the years was very significant.

Ward: The friends I met and the affection we have for one another and for the University, even 30 years later, made such an impact. My UConn friends and I may not talk for a year, but when we do, we just fall back into time. When I'm screaming at the TV while watching a UConn basketball game, I am reminded that UConn played such a large part in my development as a whole person. I'm grateful to be a UConn-for-lifer.

During my undergraduate experience I learned that education, and life, are not passive experiences. You get

out what you put in to it. That's the same advice I share with students and my own daughter, who is in college.

Q: What is the craziest thing you've ever done as a higher ed leader?

Chapdelaine: Every year I do a role reversal where the student is president and I am the student. I've practiced sports, taken ceramics, done rounds as an RA. Doing that with students was a lot of fun.

Ward: Some years ago I was thinking about revising student orientation. I took videos of old Motown songs and reworked the lyrics to help families understand aspects of going to college. I'm working on revising it for the University of Hartford.

Music is a big part of my life, and to sing and dance to the Temptations, Diana Ross, and Stevie Wonder in front of the entire campus is a very cool experience.

For parents who are just feeling some kind of way about their child going away to school, I play "Ain't Too Proud to Beg" by the Temptations: "If I have to sleep on your doorstep all night and day, just to keep you from walking away. Let your friends laugh, even this I can stand. 'Cause I want to keep you any way I can. Ain't too proud to beg."

Q: What is your best advice for each other?

Chapdelaine: I think it is really important to know yourself, because being a college president can be very hard. There's a barometer in me that says, "It is time to spend some time with students" because that refills my gas tank. That's where I find my joy. One quick conversation with a student can turn your day around.

Ward: I use the word "joy." Lean into the joy of the job as often as you lean into the challenge. What a privilege it is to share our students' journeys. That puts the wind in my sails. ☺



The Rosetti brothers from Rocky Hill, Connecticut, dedicated their latest Guinness World Record to their mother.

Volley for Mom

➡ Ettore Rosetti '92 (ED), above left, writes: My identical twin brother, Angelo [Rosetti '92 (ED)], and I were roommates at Wade House in Towers and competed in varsity tennis and intramurals, respectively. Angelo is a professional tennis (and now pickleball) coach, instructor, and mental skills practitioner. Though that is my side passion, I am a humanitarian at Save the Children, where I have been serving for 20 years. Since our careers diverged in the early 2000s, we stay connected by combining our passion and purpose through attempting to set or break Guinness World Records titles. We recently set our fourth world record in six attempts on August 17, 2024, in Stamford, Connecticut. It was the Longest Pickleball Volley Rally — 10,532 volleys lasting two hours. We dedicated the feat to our late mother while raising funds for Save the Children.

CLASS NOTES

1950s

➔ **Herbert “Herb” Cohen ’55 (BUS)** is retired from the real estate business and lives in Boca Raton, Florida, where he spends his days playing golf and bridge and rooting for Husky hoops. ➔ **Richard J. Green ’59 (BUS)**, sent a life update. As a CPA, he spent years in senior positions in banking and securities firms. Along the way, he founded G & S Numismatics, Cindy’s Restaurant, FoxFire Golf Course, and Personnel Connection Inc., all based in Texas, before retiring at age 85 as the CFO of Global Cash Card. He also flew his hot-air balloon worldwide. “My grandson, **Ryan Keane ’23 (BUS)**, was a member of the men’s ice hockey team. His four years at UConn brought back wonderful memories of my years at Storrs.”

1960s

➔ Many years after meeting in the Student Union during a dance demonstration, **Shirley (Dimmock) Perregaux ’63 (SFA)** and **Paul Perregaux ’58 (CLAS)**, ’66 MA celebrated 66 years of marriage! They were married in New London shortly before Paul began his military assignment in Germany as a Ranger/Airborne Army lieutenant. Shirley continued her junior year at UConn before joining him in 1959 in Germany. In 1962, they returned to UConn, where he taught military science and Shirley completed her fine arts degree and launched a professional singing career as a soprano soloist in sacred music. Paul later earned an MBA at Harvard and began a 40-year banking career. The Perregauxs, who live in Hernando, Florida, have four children, 11 grandchildren, and two

great-granddaughters, and enjoy alumni reunions and watching Husky sports. ➔ **Burton R. Bell ’64 (Home Ec.)**, ’66 MFA shared a life update. He launched his career in professional costume design after becoming the first UConn student to get a master’s degree in costuming — from the department of clothing in the School of Home Economics, as the School of Fine Arts did not yet offer one. He went on to design costumes for the Guthrie Theater, Broadway, the New York City Ballet, the Center Theatre Group, and Bob Mackie. He also taught theater for two years at the University of Wisconsin while designing costumes for the Theater at Monmouth. He left costuming in the ’80s, taught himself computers, and worked as a database creator for a forensic accounting firm, Freeman & Mills, in Los Angeles. Now he’s returned to New England and lives in Vermont, where he was born. ➔ **Joan (Forryan) Baldwin ’66 (ED)**, ’70 MA reports that her family has had three generations serving on UConn’s faculty. Joan’s late husband, **Robert C. “Bob” Baldwin ’66 (CLAS)**, ’71 MA, who started working at UConn in the greenhouse at age 16, retired in 1999 as interim dean of continuing education in Storrs. His father, Robert C. Baldwin, was chair of the philosophy department from 1932 to 1961. And now, Joan’s son **Michael T. Baldwin ’94 (CLAS)**, ’04 MD is an associate professor of radiology at UConn Health, where his wife, **Jennifer (DeLuca) Baldwin ’04 MD**, is also associate professor of medicine. Meanwhile, Joan’s other son, **Jonathan “Jon” Baldwin ’96 (ENG)**, graduated from UConn, as did his wife, **Jennifer “Jen” Baldwin ’97 (CLAS)**. ➔ **Richard Sigmund ’68 (CLAS)** retired from Weston Public Schools after 30 years and lives in Southport, North

Carolina. After UConn, he spent two years in the Army and a year in Vietnam, from 1969 to 1970. ➔ **Matthew Stackpole ’68 (CLAS)**, who was UConn’s student government president his senior year, received the Martha’s Vineyard Medal from the Martha’s Vineyard Museum for outstanding commitment to preserving the island’s history, arts, and culture and a Life Trustee award from the USS Constitution Museum. ➔ **William I. Brustein ’69 (CLAS)**, the Eberly Family Distinguished Professor of History Emeritus and former vice president for global strategies and international affairs at West Virginia University, recently published a monograph, “Anti-Semitism Without Jews in Germany, France and the U.S.: Phantom Enemies.”

1970s

➔ **Lynne Maquat ’74 (CLAS)** earned two more awards for her groundbreak-

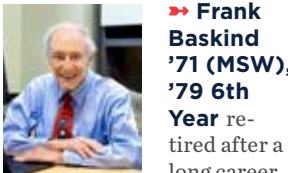
ing RNA research: the 2024 Albany Medical Center Prize in Medicine and Biomedical Research for her research on RNA mechanisms that contribute to a wide range of diseases and the 2024 Dr. Paul Janssen Award — with Alexander Varshavsky — for their fundamental discoveries regarding the regulated degradation of RNA and proteins. ➔ **Rose Jung-Gaggero ’75 (SFA)** describes recent travels to Malaysia and Borneo. She visited an orangutan sanctuary and the village where one of her travel companions grew up — where she had the honor and privilege of participating in the customary longhouse welcome ceremony. ➔ **Eva (Ogens) Steinberger ’75 (CLAS)** shares that she recently published two textbooks: “Social Context of Education,” which was designed for her History of Education course, and “Resource Guide for Teaching Elementary Science,” which is aligned with the Next Generation Science Standards and includes web-

sites and ideas for teaching inquiry-based lessons. She recently retired as a professor of math/science methods at Ramapo College of New Jersey and works as a science education consultant.



➔ **Matt Light ’78 (CLAS)** reports that the former experimental, self-governing dormitory on northwest campus called the Intentional Democratic Community (IDC) had a successful reunion recently. The IDC operated from 1974 to 1983 and had no resident assistants, janitors, or kitchen staff except for a cook. In return for doing the work of such staff, the IDC received \$6,400 a year to invest in educational activities, mostly guest speakers and field trips to Boston and New York City. During the reunion, about 100 alums spanning several graduating classes gathered on a July weekend. The group watched a play at the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry and enjoyed a catered dinner with live music by the Neybas at the nearby Holiday Hill Day Camp. “Our IDC experiment is still alive and well as we had a great time!”

➔ **Paul Clapis ’79 (CLAS)**, ’80 MS, ’85 Ph.D. has a new book, “Project Management in the Age of AI,” which explores the challenges and opportunities of integrating artificial intelligence into business practices. He is the oldest of eight children, all UConn grads.



➔ **Frank Baskind ’71 (MSW)**, ’79 6th Year re-

retired after a long career devoted to social work. Most recently, he spent 32 years at Virginia Commonwealth University as a professor and dean emeritus in the School of Social Work. Previously, he founded the undergraduate social work program at the University of Tennessee as an associate professor. He later became dean of social work at Southern Connecticut State University. Along the way, he taught in a nursing education program, worked in a police department, assisted patients in a chronic disease and rehabilitation hospital, and developed a suicide prevention and crisis intervention helpline in Connecticut.



➔ Congrats to **Kurt Telford ’79 (ED)** on being promoted to president of Charlotte Catholic High School in Charlotte, North Carolina. Telford, who has 45 years of experience in education, will lead Charlotte Catholic as its inaugural president. ➔ After a 45-year career in the health care industry, Atlantic Health System President and CEO **Brian Gragnolati ’79 (BUS)** is retiring. Atlantic Health cares for 1 million patients across New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and the New York metropolitan area with a staff of 21,000 team members and 5,440 affiliated physicians.

1980s

➔ **Andy Young ’80 (CLAS)** is out with his third book. “Life in 600 Words” features 99 columns of exactly, yup, 600 words each that appeared in Maine newspapers. ➔ **Carmella Cassetta ’81 (BUS)** won the 2024 SoCal CIO ORBIE Award as chief information officer of the year in health care. Cassetta is vice president and chief information officer at Hoag Health System in Newport Beach, California.



➔ Members of the Black Student Sit-In at the Wilbur Cross Library on April 22, 1974, reunited to mark the event’s 50th anniversary. From left: **Charles Smith ’77 (ED)**; **Rodney Bass ’75 (ED)**, ’77 MA; **John Moore ’76 (CLAS)**; **Henry Reed ’76 (BUS)**; **Lois Coleman ’75 (CLAS)**, ’95 MA, ’08 Ph.D.; **Glynis (Smith) Cassis ’74 (CLAS)**, ’91 MSW; **Glenn Cassis ’73 (CLAS)**, ’74 (SFA); **Mary Martin-Sweet ’76 (CLAS)**; and **Gary King ’74 (CLAS)**.

➔ **Bill Keena ’81 (CLAS)** was named to the board of advisors of MDI NetworX and the board of the Granite State United Way, where he serves on the audit, strategy, and selection committees and is secretary of the executive committee. He continues to serve as president of AmeriHealth New Hampshire, serving Medicaid members across the state. ➔ **Jerome H. Casey ’81 (CLAS)**, ’83 MBA received an honorary degree at last year’s Wentworth Institute of Technology summer commencement. Casey was elected to Wentworth’s board of trustees in 2012 and was the president and chief operating officer of Sekisui Diagnostics. He worked at Genzyme Diagnostics for 21 years, including as senior vice president of global sales and marketing. ➔ The International DI Society gave **A. Andra Grava ’81 (CLAS)** its W. Harold Petersen Lifetime Achievement Award for a career of service, dedication, and expertise in the field of disability income insurance. Awardees have practiced the highest ethical

standards and unselfish voluntary service.



➔ **Vicente Ithier ’85 (CLAS)** was a 2024 honoree in the Greater Hartford Puerto Rican Day Parade. Born in Río Piedras, Puerto Rico, and raised in Hartford, Ithier played basketball as a walk-on at UConn from 1982–84, played in the Puerto Rican professional league for his father’s hometown, and played for the Puerto Rican national team at the XXIV Olympic Games in Seoul. He has served on many boards and organizations, including the Newton Parks and Recreation Travel League, Mayor Mike’s Companies

for Kids, and El Futuro en Nuestras Manos mentoring program, and co-founded the Connecticut Spirit AAU girls basketball program. He is an assistant director at Imagineers LLC. He and his wife, Jacqueline, have three children, Yasmin, Vicente Jr., and Andres. ➤ Talk about bleeding blue! **Alison (Orlando) Haigis '85 (CLAS)** always knew that her family had a long relationship with UConn. When cleaning out her mother's home recently, she found a list of four generations of Huskies, starting with her maternal grandparents, **Elsa (Thompson) Chubbuck '30 (ED)** and **R. Daniel Chubbuck '31 (CLAS)**, followed by **Betsy-Eve (Chubbuck) Orlando '58 (ED)** and **Charles Orlando '61 (CLAS)**, '68 MA, '71 Ph.D; herself and **John Haigis '88 (ENG)**; and **Jackson Haigis '17 (BUS) (ENG)**, **Emma (Haigis) Huntington '17 (CLAS)**, and **Nina Haigis '20 (BUS)**, '21 MS! ➤ **Bob Newman '85 (BUS)** was named to the board of directors for the LUNgevity Foundation, dedicated to transforming how people are diagnosed and

live with lung cancer through research, education, and support. He's also the chair of ASM Global. ➤ The Kinsale Capital Group Inc. appointed **Mary Jane B. Fortin '86 (BUS)** to its board of directors. She has held executive leadership roles with some of the largest companies in the financial services industry, most recently as president and chief commercial officer of Thrivent. ➤ Congrats to **Kathleen Holt '87 MBA**, who was appointed by Gov. Ned Lamont to head Connecticut's Office of the Healthcare Advocate, which provides free legal services, advice, and support to families and businesses facing claim denials or other challenges with their public or private health coverage. She was associate director for the Center for Medicare Advocacy. After earning her MBA, she worked as a hospital administrator, then earned a law degree and became a special assistant U.S. attorney for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in Seattle. After her second child was born with significant disabilities, she founded a law practice to advocate for the needs of

older people and people with disabilities.



➤ **Leslie Imse '87 MM, MA** earned a Lifetime Achievement Award for her exceptional dedication and impact on choral music in Connecticut and beyond from the American Choral Directors Association.



➤ **Patricia A. Saunders '88 (CLAS)**, an award-winning author, poet, blogger, and motivational speaker, was a featured guest at the National Black Book Festival in Houston in October. She presented her latest memoir, "Saying Goodbye," a heartfelt exploration of grief and loss.

1990s
➤ **Burton Osterweis '90 (ENG)** announced the release of his new book, "Thirty Years a Consultant: A Humorous Romp Through Corporate America's I.T. Departments," which he describes as a sassy collection of anecdotes, observations, and sage guidance for consultants, project managers, and anyone working in a corporate setting. ➤ Inspired by a Christmas gift from his godson, **Justin French '10 (CLAS)**, of a piece of Gampel flooring, **Russell Berube**

'91 BGS wrote in about his longtime passion for UConn men's basketball. It started when, at age 12, he traveled from Southington to Storrs to watch the Huskies take on the University of Maine at the old field house. In high school, he watched Corny Thompson play at Middletown High School and was thrilled when Thompson chose to play for UConn for four years. Berube, a retired F117 program manager at Pratt & Whitney, and his wife, Janice, were men's basketball season ticket holders for many years, even traveling with the team during the Thanksgiving holiday to the Maui Invitational. Though they live in Rhode Island now, they still trek to Storrs to catch a game or two.

➤ Congrats to **Doug Bohl '92 (ENG)** on being promoted to associate dean of academic programs for the Coulter School of Engineering and Applied Sciences at Clarkson University.



➤ **Donna Lynn Germano Phillips '92 (CLAS)** is one of Nevada's first educators to receive a Social, Emotional, and Academic Development (SEAD) endorsement, helping to shape more inclusive and supportive learning environments. She was appointed to the Superintendent's Teacher Advisory Cabinet, where she champions the power of social-emotional growth and resilience as a special education teacher and speaker. She says her journey showcases the difference UConn alums make in education, inspiring students and fellow educators to grow, connect, and lead with empathy.

➤ **Burt Williamson '92 MBA**, of Greenwich, released an e-book, "Social Security and the Three Bears," which offers a unique approach to understanding Social Security. "My hope is to eliminate fear and doubt by equipping readers with the knowledge they need to have meaningful conversations with a financial advisor, leading them to make the best choice for themselves — and hopefully stir up some action in Congress, too." ➤ **Mary Anne Kanakry Clarke '94 MA** was selected as one of 24 faculty members nationwide to be part of Clemson's Civic Engagement & Voting Rights Teacher Scholars program. These faculty members will work together to create classroom teaching materials to support American democracy. ➤ **James R. Danaher '94 (CLAS)**, a partner at the Schloemer Law Firm, was appointed to Forte Bank's board of directors. He volunteers for several civic organizations, including the Kettle Moraine YMCA, SC Wave Washington County, and the West Bend Noon Kiwanis.

➤ RingCentral Inc., a provider of AI communications for businesses, appointed **Abhey Lamba '95 (ENG)** as chief financial officer. He previously was vice president of finance for global infrastructure for Amazon Web Services.



➤ **Zygmunt F. Dembek '95 Ph.D, '05 MPH** is the 26th editor-in-chief of the peer-reviewed journal Public Health Reports, the official journal of the Office of the U.S. Surgeon General and the U.S. Public Health Service. He takes the helm of the oldest public health journal in the nation, dating back to 1878. ➤ Kudos to **Jim Parker '95 MBA** on retiring from IBM after nearly 43 years. He and his wife, Marie, live in the Sandy Hook section of Newtown.



➤ **Omar Randall '96 (CLAS)** was promoted to brigadier general in the U.S. Marine Corps. ➤ **Joshua C. Watson '97 (CLAS)** was named a 2022–23 Regents Professor by the Texas A&M University System, the highest honor a faculty member can receive there.



➤ **Dawn Works-Dennis '98 (BGS), '04 MSW, '22 MS** was selected as the NAVFAC Mid-Atlantic Deputy Public Works Officer for the Naval Submarine Base in New London. She is the senior Navy federal civilian for the more than 200 men and women on the sub base and oversees a \$1.2 billion construction recapitalization program. ➤ **Karen Kukish '97 (ED), '98 MA, '06 6th Year** was named the principal of Sedgwick Middle School in West Hartford. ➤ **Adam Meltsner '98 (CLAS)** caught us up on what he's been up to. After graduating from UConn, where he was a member of Alpha Epsilon Pi, he graduated from Quinnipiac University School of Law. He went on to become a practicing attorney engaged in personal injury law;



➤ **Kathleen (Drumgool) Hermes '81 (PHARM)**, of Guilford, enjoyed watching her son, Samuel, compete in regional and national fencing competitions while he grew up. She thought it looked like a fun sport, but always figured she was too old to take it up herself. Then her husband, **Paul Hermes '80 (CLAS)**, surprised her with fencing lessons for her 49th birthday and the rest, as they say, is history. This past October, Hermes won first place in the team event in the 2024 Veteran Fencing World Championships in Dubai at age 65. She and the U.S. team defeated France, Italy, Japan, Great Britain, and Germany to reach the top spot. "I am proud to have made Team USA," she says. "It isn't a dream come true because I never would have dreamed such a thing. It is still unreal." She also came in eighth place in the foil, her weapon of choice. She prepared for the championships by practicing at least twice a week, taking two lessons a week, and competing in a tournament every month. Hermes, who worked in retail pharmacy for nine years before becoming a full-time mom to their two children, is also an avid runner. "Running does not come close to the fun I have fencing. Fencing is so hard," she says, adding, "Any accomplishment, no matter how small, feels great. And I have met the most wonderful group of women in the sport."

—GRACE MERRITT



➤ **Abhi Patni '19 (ENG)**, **Astha Patni '16 (ENG)**, **Ali Hosey '16 (ENG)**, '17 (CLAS), and **Nicki Hosey '18 (CLAS)**, '23 MA got together last year to share the Dairy Bar's classic Thanksgiving dinner ice cream pie.



VICTORY AGAIN for the
white and blue.

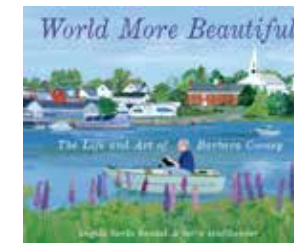
UConn

blue.uconn.edu



workers' compensation; criminal law; social security claims; and wills, trusts, and estates. He's currently a criminal defense attorney at the Kocian Law Group in Manchester. ➔ **Stephanie Radman '99 MBA** writes that she has launched a business, Mayflower Home Organizing. Calling herself the Gold Coast Organizer, her Fairfield County-based company does everything from creating Instagram-worthy closets and decluttering to preparing a home to come to market.

of entrepreneurship and innovation at Northeastern University's D'Amore-McKim School of Business, received the prestigious Entrepreneurship Practice Award from the Academy of Management. She is the founding editor and editor-in-chief of Family Business.org, a platform for family business scholars and practitioners.



➔ Random House Studio published "World More Beautiful: The Life and Art of

2000s

➔ **Kimberly A. Eddleston '01 Ph.D.**, a professor



➔ **Austin Stowell '07 (SFA)** plays the lead role of Leroy Jethro Gibbs in the highly anticipated series "NCIS: Origins."

The show follows a young Gibbs in 1991, years prior to the events of "NCIS," and is narrated by Mark Harmon. In the series, Gibbs starts his special agent career at the fledgling NCIS Camp Pendleton office, where he forges his place on a gritty, ragtag team led by NCIS legend Mike Franks.

Barbara Cooney" by **Angela Burke Kunkel '02 MA**. Her fourth picture book, it is a biography of beloved author and illustrator Barbara Cooney, a two-time Caldecott Medal winner whose work is kept in UConn's Archives & Special Collections. ➔ **Matthew Dunbar '02 6th Year** is Suffield Public Schools' new superintendent. Dunbar most recently served as assistant superintendent for administration and personnel in Glastonbury. ➔ The National Council on Problem Gambling appointed **Diana Goode '03 MBA** to its board of directors. Goode has served as executive director of the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling since May 2018, championing initiatives that address problem gambling and promote responsible gaming. ➔ **Jocelyn Tamborello-Noble '03 (ED), '04 MA, '09 6th Year** was named principal of Conard High School in West Hartford. ➔ Symetra Life Insurance Company appointed **Michael Derrig '04 (CLAS), '14 MBA** vice president and chief underwriter for its Individual Life Division. ➔ **Marko Pavela '04 (CLAS), '14 JD** writes that he's a contributor to the 10th edition of "Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills." Pavela is a practicing attorney with the Washington State Attorney General's Office. ➔ **Mara Kaminowitz '05 MA** became deputy geospatial information officer at the U.S. Department of Transportation. She lives with her husband in Columbia, Maryland. ➔ **Rick Goldberg '05 (BUS), '06 MS**, the chief financial officer for S&P Global Commodity Insights, recently became CFO for the company's newly created Chief Client Office as well. ➔ Congrats to **Nelson Merchan '06 (CLAS)** on being awarded the 2025 MLK Living Legacy Award in the Community Member category. He was honored

at a special ceremony at the Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts. Merchan has worked at UConn's School of Business as a business advisor in the Connecticut Small Business Development Center for more than 10 years. ➔ **Lauren Bird '08 (ED), '09 MA, '15 6th Year** was appointed assistant principal at Cos Cob School in Greenwich. She was previously the assistant principal at Cider Mill and Miller-Driscoll schools in Wilton. ➔ Hartford International University for Religion and Peace hired **Beatrice Fevry Stathers '08 MBA** as its inaugural vice president of business and finance. Stathers has an extensive background in higher education, most recently serving as vice president for finance and administration and chief financial officer at Western Connecticut State University. ➔ **Fany DeJesus Hannon '08 MA** was appointed as UConn's dean of students, having previously held the role on an interim basis.

2010s



➔ **James Geisler '11 (CLAS)**, executive director of Wellness Services at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, published "Thrive Year One: The Essential Mental Health Workbook for First-Year College Students." Based on his experience overseeing student mental health in higher education, it takes a proactive approach to helping first-year college students prepare themselves and prioritize



SPORT & HUMAN RIGHTS

DETAILS

OCT
22-24
2025

THE DODD CENTER
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



JOIN US FOR THE 2025
DODD HUMAN RIGHTS SUMMIT
SPORT & HUMAN RIGHTS

Prominent professional and collegiate athletes, thought leaders, policymakers, activists, scholars, students, artists, and business leaders from around the world will gather to examine the promise, too often unfulfilled, of sport as a safe, inclusive, and equitable environment for all. Through a mix of high-profile keynote addresses, fireside chats, and panel discussions, we will engage a range of global and domestic issues at the intersection of sport and human rights.

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



their mental health as they begin the college journey. ➔ **Salih Ayluctarhan '13 LLM** reports that he has earned his Artificial Intelligence Governance Professional (AIGP) certification. He started a new role as an innovation solutions analyst at Onal Galant, where he helps navigate the complex landscape of AI implementation while ensuring regulatory compliance and ethical considerations.



➔ East Hartford High School teachers **Jeremy Crouse '13 (ED), '14 MA** and **Rachael Orbe '13 (CLAS), '17 (ED), '18 MA** got married last summer at Harkness Memorial Park.



➔ Congrats **Allyson (Gambino) Beluk '13 (CLAS)** and **Michael Beluk '15 (CLAS)**, who were married last July in Stamford. They

began dating a few years after college, when they moved back to their hometown of Stamford. Allyson works in media planning and analytics on the personal health team at Philips in Stamford, while Michael works in finance at Direct Wines Inc. in Norwalk. "We have been avid Huskies fans our entire lives and still attend basketball games together," Allyson says. They even have a 6-year-old Shiba Inu named Maya, after who else but UConn women's basketball phenom Maya Moore.



➔ **Miller Oberman '13 MA, '17 Ph.D.** has published his second book of poems, "Impossible Things," an intimate account of fatherhood, loss, grief, Jewish identity, and family. ➔ **Marcos A. Mendoza '14 LLM**, of Austin, Texas, was named a contributing lawyer-editor of the recently published 12th edition of "Black's Law Dictionary." ➔ **Gregory P. Hnat '17 (CLAS)**, of Groton, is a senior airman in the U.S. Air Force in Las Vegas. While stationed at Nellis Air Force Base, Hnat received numerous accolades and awards, most recently the Air and Space Achievement Medal for meritorious service. He also got the chance to ride in an F-16 fighter jet,

which he described as "a definite bucket-list topper." ➔ **Robert Wooley '17 (BUS)**, chief operating officer of Apple Rehab, was named to the Hartford



Business Journal's 2024 "40 Under 40" list. Wooley, of Simsbury, manages 20 skilled nursing facilities with 2,500 employees. At age 26, he co-founded Nurses at Home, a home health agency, serving around 100 seniors daily. He started his career working full



➔ **Martha (Sertl) Hoffman '79 (BUS)** writes: I recently went to the final four in Tampa with three other "girls" who were dorm mates in Wade Hall, late '70s. We had a blast watching the team win No. 12! We stayed at a friend's house in Florida and were joined by two of our husbands, who also are huge fans and attended both games. We all love our women's basketball team and connect during the season by texting before, during, and after the games. Shout out to Julie Smith and Diane Mackey, who could not be there with us. Go Huskies!

From left: Phil Hoffman, **Jennifer Bayne '79 (SAH)**, **Martha Hoffman**, **Mary McNeil Earwaker '79 (ED)**, **Holly Daniell Miller '79 (NUR)**, and Paul Miller.



➔ "It's really hard to succeed as an entrepreneur. If you believe in what you're doing, have persistence and the determination to stick with it, and believe in yourself, it can be done. If you're learning by trial and error, you may end up knocking your head against the wall time and time again. If you can learn some of the techniques early on, you'd be so much farther ahead," says **Toni Boucher '02 MBA**, whose new book, "The Husky Effect: How UConn Is Creating the Entrepreneurs of the Future," can help with exactly that. Boucher, at left with her School of Business Hall of Fame award, is the first selectman of Wilton, served 22 years in the Connecticut General Assembly, and directed a top asset-management firm. As an MBA student at UConn, she discovered a community of experts at the School of Business and beyond, who she says continue to nurture and guide entrepreneurs, encourage risk-taking, and support those who dare to dream big. The book, co-written with Josh Young, notes that the rise of UConn basketball has become a catalyst for broad transformation. The teams — with three championship trophies in the last three years — have created a culture of excellence that extends to all areas of the University. "I think the future of the School of Business is bright. I'm looking forward to the school being in the Top 20 and then Top 10 of public university business schools," Boucher, shown with her School of Business Hall of Fame award, says.



➔ **Erin Crow '15 (CLAS)** and **Jason Timko '15 (BUS)**, who met at UConn and married in 2022, welcomed their baby boy, Luca Robert Timko, in November 2024. He's already ready for game day!



➔ **Marissa Gelfand '19 (NUR)** and **David Angelo '19 (CLAS)** were married last July in Westchester County, New York. She's a nurse at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and he's a math and computer science teacher at Greenwich High School. They met at UConn and began dating their senior year, when they lived next door to each other.

2020s

➔ **Giana DiNatale '20 (SFA)** took the stage at the Hollywood Bowl in July to play bass in a performance of "Barbie the Movie: In Concert."



➔ After meeting for the first time at Dunkin' in the Student Union, **Olivia Levine '20 (CLAS)**, '22 MA and **Justin Szeplin '19 (CLAS)** were married last July at Candlewood Inn in Brookfield before a crowd of fellow Huskies. "We are so grateful for our UConn chapter, and we owe finding each other to Storrs!" Olivia says.



➔ **Ryan Palzere '21 (ENG)** and **Chelsea Cocozza '22 (BUS)** married last June at the Vyne in Middlebury. They met through Phi Sigma Pi fraternity and began dating in

SHARE YOUR NEWS!

➔ To submit a Class Note, send an email: alumni-news@uconn.alumni.com

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

Submissions may be edited for clarity and/or length.

February 2020, just before the COVID pandemic. "Our time at UConn was spent catching sunsets at Horsebarn Hill, grabbing a bite to eat in Storrs Center, and going for walks in Mansfield Hollow. Thank you so much for bringing us together. Go Huskies!"



➔ Sharing this pic with legendary superfan Big Red at the Big East Tournament! From left: **Aaron Belletsky '22 (CLAS)**, **Cam Treichal '22 (CLAS)**, Tom Emery aka Big Red. ➔ **Michael Sorm-rude '24 Cert.** completed Yale School of Public Health's graduate certificate program in climate change and health, where his research focused on the impact of climate change on Connecticut residents afflicted with asthma. He's currently pursuing Harvard Medical School graduate certificates in teaching in medicine and clinical research, while working as the anatomy and physiology series coordinator and as an assistant professor at Southern Connecticut State University.



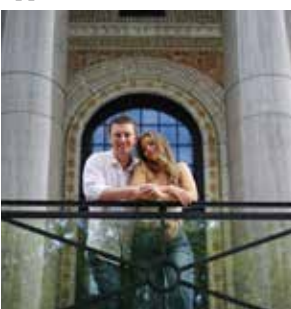
time in senior care while a full-time student at UConn.

➔ **Cayla Franco '17 (CLAS)**, an assistant vice president at The Bulfinch Companies Inc., received BOMA (Building Owners & Managers Association) Boston's 2024 TOBY+ Industry Award for Rising Professional of the Year. ➔ **Emily Luna '17 (CLAS)** has graduated from Western New England University School of Law and joined the law firm of Diana, Conti & Tunila in Manchester.



➔ **Ryan Vera-no '18 (CLAS)** reports that he graduated from the New York College of Podiatric Medicine last May and started his residency in podiatric medicine and surgery at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City. ➔ **Jenny Tang '18 (CLAS)** and **Fook Yee Harry Lo '17 (CLAS)** were married last July in Hong

Kong, surrounded by UConn friends. They met during Lo's senior year and had dated long-distance ever since. They now live in Boston, where he is a psychologist at the Boston Latin School and she is a Cloud FinOps engineer at Apple.



➔ UConn law student **Will Butler '18 (CLAS)**, '21 MPA and **Rebecca Ouellette '19 (CLAS)**, '21 MPA were recently engaged. "We met at UConn and were very excited to celebrate with our friends from UConn!" Will says.

UConn

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

34 NORTH EAGLEVILLE ROAD
STORRS, CT 06269-3144

Nonprofit Org.

U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

Hartford, CT

Permit No. 4759

