

Fall 2014

## OVCS Literary Magazine VIII 2014

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# OVCS

LITERARY MAGAZINE VIII Fall 2014



*“No social advance rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work of dedicated individuals.”*

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

# Scholar Activists...

## How are you working together?

### THINK

I'm looking at issues from all angles and want to see the big picture.  
I am analyzing systems and how they can perpetuate inequities.

### DO

I am building relationships with a wide range of people, taking risks and working together to create a better future for all of us.  
I am building more affordable housing.

### LEAD

As part of a team, I am creating alternatives and constructing consensus.  
I am designing my teaching and learning experiences and creating a life of meaning and purpose.

**Gratitude and joy to the Connecticut College scholar activists!**

**The Connecticut College OVCS Literary Magazine**

————— Vol. VIII Fall 2014 —————

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# OVCS & ELT

By Megan Hulsart '14 AmeriCorps VISTA

**B**uilding upon a successful partnership with Jennings Elementary School, a K-5 public school focusing on dual-language instruction, OVCS is excited to continue working with the Expanded Learning Time Program (ELT). Brought about through a grant, ELT creates 300 additional hours of learning time each academic year, largely through the involvement of community partners. Connecticut College OVCS is proudly one of the partners contributing to student achievement. As a partner organization, OVCS deploys teams of student mentors and facilitators to Jennings' classrooms. These teams work with Jennings students, building mentorship relationships and helping to strengthen and expand upon the instruction in their regular classrooms. This year OVCS will be implementing a new curriculum in ELT. This curriculum, which meets local and national education standards, focuses on social studies and science lessons and activities. Last semester when OVCS started using a similar curriculum in ELT the students demonstrated high enthusiasm. Students are craving engaging lessons in multiple disciplines and ELT is an arena where that instruction can take place.

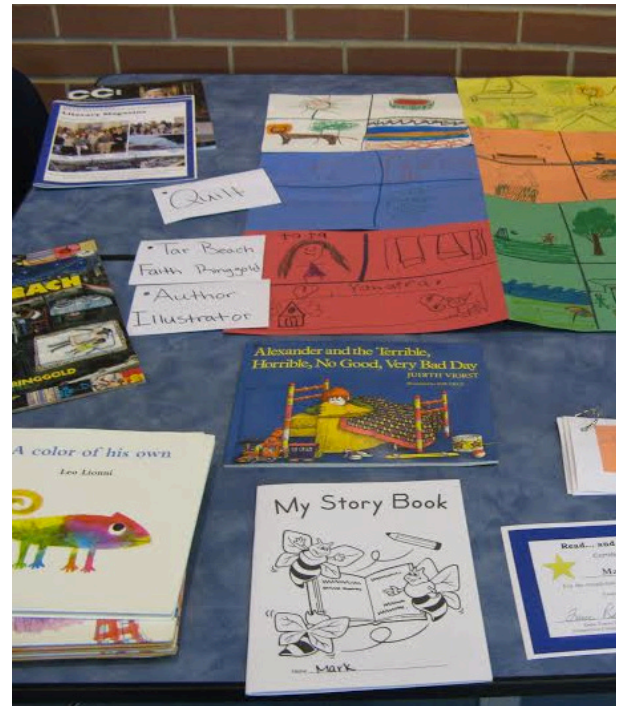
ELT grants and community partnerships bring additional resources to the district. New London schools use a scripted curriculum



and the content provided by community partners compliments the content. ELT partners are able to provide the time, personnel, and resources to expand learning time. With ELT we partner to provide New London students a well-rounded education. As mentors, Conn students pass on the opportunities afforded to them. Additionally, I have seen the results of these programs first hand, as a tutor, program facilitator and a student teacher at Jennings, and the results are promising. I see the students becoming better readers, more critical thinkers, and more engaged learners.

**“Students are craving engaging lessons in multiple disciplines, and ELT is an arena where that instruction can take place.”**

On a personal note, getting involved in ELT and similar programs in the New London Public Schools throughout my four years at Conn was one of the best decisions I made in my time as a student here. For me, working with the community students served as a reset-button of sorts, giving me an opportunity to focus and ground myself in things I felt were important and necessary. When life as a college student became overwhelming, it was great to work in the schools, where the students were eager for individualized attention. There are few things more rewarding than watching students become better versions of themselves – academically, socially, or emotionally. Through ELT, I was able to invest in New London’s students and witness their growth. Knowing I played a small part in it, remains one of my proudest accomplishments at Conn. A favorite quote of mine, written by Forest Whitcraft is, “The world may be a little better because I was important in the life of a child.” As an educator this is a principle I live by, and ELT was an excellent opportunity to put this philosophy into practice.



*Having Connecticut College as a partner during ELT has been wonderful for our students. Our students have benefited from not only making a special connection with a college student, but are also getting enrichment through vocabulary building, hands-on learning and studying certain topics. I have seen students be totally engaged while they were walking around the school looking for words, or materials they could use for their projects. What a great way to tie in what they learn in the classroom during the day with what they learn during ELT.”*

-Principal Texidor & Teacher Ms. Reitz



# SUMMER IN BARCELONA

By Melanie Argueta '15

This summer I had the amazing opportunity to travel to Barcelona Spain for my CISLA internship. CISLA helped me find my internship in the Hospital Clinic where I worked in an HIV lab. Working in Barcelona has been my favorite experience thus far. I was able to learn new techniques, and how to conduct research in a completely different way than in the states. What I loved most about working at the hospital were the people in my lab. They really helped me transition to the new lifestyle, including me in their coffee and lunch breaks and outside events. The lab atmosphere felt more like a home, which is something you do not hear very often. I was always excited to walk in and really enjoyed every moment of it. In fact, I was always so busy that I didn't get a chance to miss home.

I chose Barcelona mainly because of its beautiful culture, advanced technology in research and to improve my Spanish skills. Spain has really opened my eyes to a different kind of beauty, not only because of its beautiful architecture but also its people. I was truly shocked at first by the kindness and willingness people have to help one another. The Catalan lifestyle is completely different than that in the states, which made it easy to adapt to. In fact, I might of adapted too well.

I was also lucky enough to live right in front of the Sagrada Familia, which is one of Barcelona's most preserved and cherished cathedrals. This is what I loved most about being in Spain - having the chance to experience such a beautiful culture everyday. This made me extremely grateful to be in a school that encourages

their students to travel so much. Connecticut College really makes it possible for its students to travel anywhere in the world, all you really need to do is to decide where to go. Being a Molecular Biology major made it difficult to study abroad during the school semester, but this did not discourage me from traveling. For this reason I decided to make my internship international by applying to CISLA. I loved the special networking with the Conn family. I had the chance to have coffee with a Conn alumni who works in a leadership development company in Barcelona. She was friendly enough to cook me a dinner in her home and advise me on what to do during my summer stay. I also had the chance to meet with various students from Conn that were in Spain during the course of the summer conducting research as well.

“What I loved most about my travels was the networking, especially with Conn students.”

Overall I had an amazing summer that has opened my eyes to different cultures and customs. It provided me with opportunities to be adventurous and more willing to try new things. I was also able to travel to Paris and Italy which made my summer even more wonderful. I really was able to create lasting relationships with the people there and it forced me to see different perspectives on things. I not only learned in my lab but also in the outside world too. I learned so much about geography, politics, and history. This summer was essentially a school of travel.





# BEECHWOOD CONNECTION

By Michelle Behr, Therapeutic Recreation Director, Beechwood Rehab and Nursing Center

I began working at Beechwood Post Acute and Transitional Care in March of 2006. In August or September of that year I received a mailing from the Connecticut College OVCS office inviting me to come to the community learning/volunteer fair. I had never been invited to a college for a volunteer fair before and was excited to possibly meet some students and bring some interns/volunteers into Beechwood. My first volunteer fair was an eye opener. I learned about the mission statement at Conn College with a focus on learning in the community. I also had a lot of interest from the students.



After the fair students began calling and emailing me to volunteer and complete internships at Beechwood. I set up orientations, trained students and then had the assistance of some of the most creative and helpful students. Over the years I have had students help decorate the facility, play bingo, start up a yoga group weekly, assist residents living with dementia, help with parties and generally increase the quality of life of my residents by sharing their time with our residents from the Greatest Generation.

Beechwood's mission is to be in the wellness business. We do so by using a holistic approach throughout the patient's stay by developing treatment plans and services in collaboration with the patients, physician, family and staff. The community learners from OVCS have fit in perfectly with our mission by incorporating an intergenerational element into our resident's day to day lives. Our residents enjoy the effervescence of the Connecticut College students and the students learn about varied and interesting people from our communities' senior population.

This past spring I was approached by the OVCS office and a representative of the Alzheimer's Association to become part of their Holleran Center PICA class training. I was excited to have the opportunity to help students who were learning about Alzheimer's type dementia to experience the

people living with this disease. The students learned about dementia in their class and then they saw the effect of the illness on the people, hands on. The PICA students sat with residents living with dementia and talked to and interacted with them one on one helping to reduce their anxiety and to increase their socialization. The residents enjoyed having young people to talk to and were happier after the interactions.

I'm proud to say that Beechwood nominated Conn College and the OVCS office for the Volunteer Group Award through CAHCF, CT Association of Healthcare Facilities, and they won! Representatives from Beechwood and the OVCS office had the pleasure of a lovely day at Mystic Seaport for the awards ceremony.

Beechwood is turning 59 this summer and we look forward to future collaborations with volunteers and interns interested in working with our valued seniors.



**T**he New London Writer's Block InK celebrated more than 10 Years of igniting social change on the page and stage with a gala at Evans Hall in an "awards show" style, to thank the many individuals and organizations who have consistently supported the organization along it's journey.

From helping to place interns, work study students and volunteers to identifying resources from facilities to critical supplies, for more than a decade Connecticut College OVCS has been a critical partner and advocate and therefore was one of the honorees at the A.C.E. (Arts, Community, Excellence) awards ceremony and received a "Purpose Partner" Award. Associate Dean and OVCS Director Tracee Reiser received the award on behalf of Connecticut College.

# THE LONG ROAD TO THE BALLOT

By Maura Hallisey '13, Young Alumni Trustee

Politics is never really in stasis. The political landscape is one of constant progression and regression, shifting and morphing to include more individuals, disenfranchise others, and to redefine what it means to be a participant in our democracy. Despite the fluid nature of our politics, American history, the assemblage of our country's collective successes and mistakes, so often probes its lessons in the face of contemporary challenges, saying we've been here before. And of course, it's true. While the U.S. endures changes in representation and demographics, the issues we face are not totally unseen. And of all the modern problems we face, one matter with particular vestiges of the past in its midst is that of voting rights.

By June of 2014, 83 restrictive voting laws have already been proposed in 29 different states. These laws attempt to limit early voting periods and institute strict i.d. laws that make it difficult for marginalized groups, specifically the poor, elderly, and young, to register and cast a ballot. Voting rights have gradually taken a hit since the 2010 midterm elections and increasingly so after the Supreme Court struck down Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act in 2013, a clause that required states with histories of voting discrimination to get federal approval before changing electoral laws. Though this current

climate paints a bleak outlook, we can take solace and inspiration in the collective actions of those before us, especially those of young people, who have long been mobilizing forces behind voting rights.



From the activists who fought to ratify the 15th and 19th amendments, to the students who coordinated registration drives across the south in the early 1960s, to Dr. King and Civil Rights icons like Fannie Lou Hamer and Bayard Rustin who championed the passing of the Voting Rights Act, the struggle over the vote is threaded into the fabric of the American narrative. These fights serve as a striking reminder that it took and takes arduous effort for some just to make it to the starting line of our democracy.

# VOTE

**“The denial of the vote, whether it be through poll taxes, literacy tests, or i.d. laws, is a covert attempt to maintain the status quo and hegemonic order by those that have long dominated.”**

The significance of the the voting rights movement is twofold. In a striking and almost unprecedented manner, these campaigns saw the organization of hundreds of activists all galvanized towards a singular cause. The work of these activists highlighted the importance of planning, diligence, and collective strength to enact holistic and thorough change. Beyond the power of its organization, these movements located the right to vote as a fundamental part of civil rights and posed the questions of “who gets a say in our democracy?” and by extension “who gets to be considered American?”.

The denial of the vote, whether it be through poll taxes, literacy tests, or i.d. laws, is a covert attempt to maintain the status quo and hegemonic order by those that have long dominated. When we do exercise the right to vote, we subtly rebel against these forces and claim our rightful stake in the political process. So as the political climate continues to shift and alter in a direction that favors empirical data over emotional aesthetics and lived experiences, the time is ripe for another iteration of the voting rights movement. Yet, this movement must be motivated not just by the vote, but by what expanded voting will inevitably bring- namely, a fairer, more inclusive society. More voices in the political process will foster vital changes like a comprehensive immigration plan, nondiscriminatory incarceration policies, and adequate housing rights, and it is these changes that will then characterize a fuller and real democracy.

# THE NEW LONDON PUBLIC SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP

By Katherine Ericson, Chief Academic Officer, New London Public Schools



The New London Public Schools has been extremely proud to partner with the Connecticut College Office of Volunteers for Community Service. This past year we were especially excited about the opportunities this partnership created for our children, as well as for the Connecticut College students. A wider range of collaborative initiatives is a direct result of our district's attempt to expand our long-standing successful partnership with the Connecticut College OVCS.

In an effort to support the district, Connecticut College opens its campus doors for district business meetings and retreats. Tracee Reiser and Kim Sanchez have committed themselves to be active participants on our School Governance Councils; New London is extremely fortunate

to have Connecticut College staff members and students who want to share in the work of preparing K-12 students for successful lives as adults. Input provided during School Governance Council Meetings, and their participation in the Teacher of the Year selection process and interview committees has supported our efforts to increase community involvement in our decision-making practices.

The district is grateful for the partnerships with Connecticut College OVCS, which maintain a student-centered focus. This year for the first time, two of our elementary schools expanded the student day. In order to do this, we worked with Connecticut College OVCS to bring in numerous student intern/volunteers per day throughout the year to work

with our youngest students in Expanded Learning Time. This collaboration relied on consistency and fine-tuning of practices in an effort to “polish the stone” of the partnership. This huge commitment was built on a foundation of rewarding past partnerships that opened the Connecticut College campus to our middle school students as part of an after-school program and the long-term commitment between Connecticut College OVCS and the district's Camp Rotary.

This partnership is inextricably interwoven into the fabric and culture of the New London Public Schools. The district is committed to building on our successes and expanding our relationships with Connecticut College OVCS in an effort to benefit the entire New London Community.

# MY AMERICORPS VISTA EXPERIENCE

By Jennifer Cunningham '13, AmeriCorps VISTA

**M**y time as an AmeriCorps VISTA at Connecticut College has been incredible. OVCS truly works to set an example for the campus by working to engage college students in the community, which is why I was excited to start my term exactly a year ago. Throughout my term I have learned to appreciate community engagement and cultivate it in the college students that I met. Not only have I received support from OVCS, I have received support through AmeriCorps. Being a part of that network has helped me broaden my understanding of capacity building, effective communication and community development. Over the course of this year I have had the opportunity to work with amazing community partners, students and Connecticut College staff and faculty. This year I was involved in numerous programs

and events all designed to improve community engagement and support the New London community. Although it was a bit awkward transitioning from student to the professional position as an AmeriCorps VISTA, I enjoyed being at the other end of the desk so to speak.

My role was as a recruiter and liaison between the campus and the community of New London is one that I will always cherish. Knowing that I have helped to create and maintain effective partnerships between Connecticut College students and New London has made me realize how important having OVCS is on campus. Students have the opportunity to go out and effect change while organizations have extra support to carry out their goals and activities. As time progressed I quickly got the hang of things and developed

a new range of skills. Those skills will always be with me and help to further my career goals. OVCS has been fundamental in my professional and personal development. There were times when I felt a bit overwhelmed but through the magic of OVCS all of the challenges we faced were dealt with. The office is not only welcoming, it is collaborative. I felt like I had a voice and that my input mattered. Not all first post-college jobs are like that. I look forward to hearing about future AmeriCorps VISTAs at Connecticut College and seeing the relationship with community partners progress.

**President Obama announced new efforts to expand national service and improve pathways to employment for national service alumni in celebration of the 20th anniversary of AmeriCorps.**

# QU'EST-CE QUE VOUS ALLEZ FAIRE?

By Virginia Anderson, Assistant Professor of Theater, Connecticut College

The balloons caught my eye. Bright blue balloons adorning the main entrance to the College nearly leapt into my periphery as I drove to my favorite coffee shop in New London early this morning. I felt a surge of excitement – despite the drowsiness that was leading me to the coffee shop in the first place – for it was a visual reminder that today was Move-In Day! I couldn't help but feel excited, vicariously sharing in the hopes and anxieties of the incoming class, knowing of so many opportunities that await them and confident that they would create many more, themselves.

As I continued to make my way to the coffee shop, I thought about my own first fall term as a college student. I vividly remember my 8:30 a.m. French class that met every day. Every day. At 8:30. In the morning. Okay, it didn't meet on the weekends, but still. My professor, a dear friend to this day, had more energy than anyone I'd ever seen (and I believe he somehow did it without coffee!) and a

contagious enthusiasm that made me want to come to class. I remember conversing in basic French with my classmates, becoming more facile with the language as the term progressed, conjugating verbs with growing confidence and noticing how I paid more attention to the world around me as I acquired a second vocabulary. *Etre* – to be. *Aller* – to go. *Faire* – to make or to do. *Wait a minute...* to make or to do.

In English these words connote such different things. But I believe the French have it right: they shouldn't. *To do* is so often considered ephemeral: “What did you do today?” “What I Did Over My Summer Vacation.” There's a sense of something fleeting – something that occurred for a spell and then ended. But think about it: “What did you make today?” “What I Made Over My Summer Vacation.” There's an extra commitment and creativity implied. It results in something that endures. There is an implied ownership and responsibility in what you do... and in what you don't

do. It implies caring about something enough to invest the time, resources and energy to make something – to do something about it.

One of the people I admire most, Broadway Director and Choreographer Jerry Mitchell, models these ideas through something he has both done and made (*quelque chose qu'il a fait*): an annual burlesque fundraiser entitled Broadway Bares. In the early 1990s he was a featured dancer in the chorus of a Broadway musical called *The Will Rogers Follies*. All around him in New York City, friends and acquaintances were getting sick; at that time treatment options for the growing AIDS epidemic were quite limited. The public was terrified; in their reporting the popular media had been presenting images of sickly, emaciated people, often covered with bright purplish lesions. This fear led to stigma and discrimination.

Not for everyone, however, and largely not within the Broadway theater community. Two theater industry

organizations Broadway Cares and Equity Fights AIDS, which have since merged into one, were raising money for care, education, and social services for people living with AIDS. They held bake sales, a flea market selling all kinds of theater ephemera, they created variety shows – all kinds of things. Mitchell knew he wanted to do something to help but none of the existing fundraisers felt like the right fit for him. He was stuffing envelopes and participating in other fundraising campaigns when a friend observed that his featured dance in *The Will Rogers Follies* – for which he danced nearly naked on top of a drum – was one of the most popular numbers in the show. What if he did something similar on his own... but to raise money to combat the stigma associated with AIDS?

And so he did. Jerry gathered some of his closest friends from the show and went downtown where they danced and stripped down to their skivvies at a popular bar. They filled a sweaty pillowcase with nearly eight thousand dollars that night.

This annual event has grown, taking place on one night only. It fills ballrooms and draws on the donated talents of dancers; celebrities; makeup, set,

costume, lighting and sound designers; choreographers, directors, stage managers.... hundreds of volunteers make this happen every year, raising millions of dollars for Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS.

It's important to recognize that for all of the financial success it has achieved, Broadway Bares makes an equally important contribution. Jerry Mitchell did what he did at a time when sex was considered dangerous – even life-threatening. Overturning both “victim mentality” and the fear associated with AIDS, Broadway Bares offered a fiercely determined celebration of sexuality through carefully choreographed music and dance performance. Mitchell emphasizes its purpose: “Broadway Bares always was built for the community and celebrating life now, not wanting death, but celebrating the life you have now and learning to live with your life now. That’s what it was, that’s what it is.”

President Bergeron calls on us to “exercise civic and social responsibility” by putting “the liberal arts into action by engaging with the global and local communities and to promote excellence by deepening ... commitment to

the social, civil, and educational rights of all people.” Through what he has done – and continues to do – Jerry Mitchell has taught us a lot about what it means to “Do”:

1. Care about something. Care deeply, care passionately.
2. Know yourself. What special skills, talents, or experiences can you draw on?
3. Connect with a community and get support from your friends.
4. Make something happen, and make it fun.
5. Always think about how it might last and keep it going.

As you begin to make plans for all of the things you want to do during your time at Conn, I urge you to think about it slightly differently: create a list of all of things you want to make while you're at Conn. Think about how they will last beyond your time here. What kinds of friends do you want to make and what do you need to do to have them endure? What kind of difference can you make in the community – both on campus and off? What kind of difference will you make in the world, and what will you do to make that difference? Finally, aspire to both make and do without regard for distinction between the two; *aspire à faire*.



*“Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, closest to home - so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person: The neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”*

## **Eleanor Roosevelt**

Remarks at the United Nations, March 27, 1958

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Thank you to our 2013 – 2014 community partners for working to improve the quality of life in our community and partnering with Connecticut College to educate students to put the liberal arts into action in a global society.

- Alliance for Living
- B.P. Learned
- Beech Brook Farm
- Beachwood Rehab Center
- B.P. Learned Mission
- Children’s Tree Montessori School
- Covenant Shelter
- Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center
- Drop in Learning Center
- Expressiones Cultural Center
- FRESH New London
- Gemma E. Moran Food Bank
- Habitat for Humanity
- Hearing Youth Voices
- High Hopes Therapeutic Riding Center
- Higher Edge – Access to Achieve. Support to graduate.
- Homeless Hospitality Center
- Humane Society of SECT
- Hygienic Arts
- L&M Hospital
- Ledge Light Health District
- Montville Youth Center
- Mystic Aquarium
- New London Community Health Center
- New London Community Meals
- New London County Historical Society
- New London Day Nursery
- New London Main Street
- New London Music Festival
- New London Office of Youth Affairs
- New London Public Defenders
- New London Public Library
- **New London Public Schools**
- New London Senior Center
- Noank Group Homes & Support Services
- New London Youth Affairs
- CT State Office of Victim Affairs
- OIC
- Pequot Health
- Red Tail Learning Center
- Safe Futures
- Save the Sound
- Sound Community Services
- Thames Valley Council for Community Action
- Waterford Country School
- Writer’s Block
- Youth Ministry

# THE OVCS LITERARY MAGAZINE

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