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April 2016

Build Community

OVCS NEWS



The Children's Expo: Learning as a Community

Pablo Jairo Tuttillo '13

"I want to stop bullying because I have been bullied before."

"What I am passionate about in the world is education."

"I believe that I am a leader because I help people, I am kind."

These are a few responses written by 5th graders upon being asked: "What are you passionate about to improve in the world? What makes you a leader in your community?" Thanks to the collaboration of their mentors and teachers: Mr. Baez, Ms. Cohen, Ms. Lewis and Ms. Ayala at the Jennings School, this reflection workshop was implemented in preparation for The 6th Annual International Children's Expo on World Languages and Cultures at Connecticut College.

As an alumnus from BDJMS, The Williams School and Connecticut College, I am intrinsically connected to the various facets of community development, education and socio-economic disparities in New London.

My arrival to the city as an eleven-year old immigrant has played a central part in my pursuit to reach children from immigrant and disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. My motivation has been to encourage community engagement so that we may better collaborate on advancing our leaders. While I majored in International Relations and minored in Arabic Studies at the College, I sent a proposal to the Social Entrepreneurship Initiative offered by The Holleran Center for Community Action and Public Policy. Six years later, we have been celebrating a Connecticut College and New London tradition that embraces the local and global characteristics of our communities.

Over 80 elementary school students came to learn in different stations about Chinese, Arabic, Russian, Hebrew, Spanish, Polish, Korean, German and French. With the collaboration of Laura Little and Nina Papathanasopoulou from the Connecticut College Language and Culture Center and the Foreign Language Fellows program, we gathered over 30 dynamic Connecticut College students to lead the language groups. Tracee Reiser, my mentor and advisor from The Holleran Center, and the Office of Volunteers for Community Service (OVCS) has been my guide to design the Expo since 2011.



(Continued)

The Expo builds on the institutional relationship between OVCS and the Jennings School. Moreover, Connecticut College students have always been at the heart of the Expo because they are passionate about foreign language exchange and international education, naturally aligning with the mission of the Expo.

The New London schools offer a variety of opportunities for Conn students to engage in the design of educational

curriculum, community development, bilingual and international education and much more. I encourage all Conn students to take their academic passions to the social entrepreneurship level. For me, the Expo on Foreign Languages has been a success and I can't wait to implement future ideas such as: an Expo on Math & Science, an Expo on Art, an Expo on the Environment, or an Expo on Human Rights.

Bryan Stevenson

Hanako Brais '18



On April 4th, Connecticut College and the wider New London community welcomed renowned attorney Bryan Stevenson to the Connecticut College campus. This event took form through the collaboration between One Book One Region of eastern Connecticut, the community partnership work of Connecticut College staff and faculty, and the launching of President Bergeron's Distinguished Lecture series. Stevenson is the founder and director of the Equal Justice Initiative, an organization that provides legal representation to those who have been denied fair and just treatment in the legal system. Often, their clients are people who have been sentenced to life in prison, or those who face capital punishment. Stevenson captivated the audience in Palmer Auditorium with his powerful narrative as he recounted stories from his book *Just Mercy*, and offered his advice on how to change the world.

At the reception preceding his talk, I was struck by the warmth of Stevenson's presence as he graciously greeted the attendees. Stevenson's compassionate and encouraging presence continued into his speech. He began by explaining that there are four key points in changing the world: that (1) there is power in proximity; (2) we must change the narratives that perpetuate inequality; (3) protect our hopefulness; and (4) be willing to do uncomfortable things.

The topic of Stevenson's talk was anything but

light, as his work involves cases related to capital punishment. He recounted gripping stories of his clients on death row, cases where his clients had been wrongly convicted or were denied fair trials. Stevenson described a circumstance where their final request for a stay of execution for one of his clients was denied by the Supreme Court. Before this man was taken to the execution room, Stevenson spoke with him on the phone. According to Stevenson, this man had an intellectual disability, and had been both physically and sexually abused as a child. This disability caused him to stutter uncontrollably, and as he spoke to Stevenson in the final moments of his life, "he was stuttering worse than usual and having great difficulty getting his words out. The imminent execution had unnerved him, but he was trying valiantly to express his gratitude for our efforts." As Stevenson relayed this moment to us, we could hear the heartbreak and pain in his voice.

Despite the tears threatening to spill out of my eyes and the intense despair I felt in listening to the stories of federally mandated executions, I could not help walking away from the event with a feeling of hope. After all of the heartbreaking stories that were shared that night, Stevenson wasn't just asking for our anger. Instead, he was creating a call to action, a call for hopefulness. The injustices in the world will break you, Stevenson explained, "I'm broken too ... that's why I do what I do."

Field Trip to the Nautilus Museum

Gabriella Silva '16



For the past several weeks, the 2nd graders at Jennings Elementary School have been learning all about submarines. The ELT mentors, a group of Connecticut College students, have worked alongside these children, explaining what a submarine is, and how it operates, building an actual model-size submarine, and even assembling objects to bring along on a submarine voyage.

When I had the pleasure of announcing to my class that we would be visiting the New London Submarine Base, the students were beyond ecstatic. Although the activities outlined previously had been well organized and successful, actually seeing the submarine and exploring its interior would allow them to deepen their understanding of this watercraft and truly envision what it would be like to live below water.

As the bus pulled into the parking lot of the Museum and students

caught their first glimpse of the Nautilus, their excitement heightened. I heard some students scream: "WOW!!! THIS IS SO COOL!" Others were fascinated by the submarine's size. One 2nd grader even noted that this was, without a doubt, "the best day of his life". We quickly made our way towards the submarine, ready to begin investigating.

Even though all of this excitement had convinced me that it would be nearly impossible to prevent the children from bypassing the museum and running straight towards the submarine, the 2nd graders were so intrigued by this massive watercraft that they stayed close to their mentors throughout the journey, knowing that these were their best sources of information. Once inside, they asked countless questions and insisted on walking through every corner of its interior, not wanting to miss a single detail. A second trip into Nautilus was even required to make sure that nothing had gone by unnoticed. As we departed the submarine, we were escorted through the adjacent museum. There, a museum guide shared with us the history of Nautilus and provided information on submarines in general.

Perhaps my favorite part of the entire field trip was the bus ride back to Jennings. The kids were so happy and kept on thanking the mentors for organizing and participating in this field trip. Although these acknowledgements were simple, they reminded me of why I have been so eager to participate in ELT for every semester since sophomore year: these children truly cherish the opportunity to interact closely with mentors. The relationship between Connecticut College mentors and Jennings children is mutualistic, as both parties gain so much from these shared experiences. Participating in field trips like these, leading activities that deepen the students' understanding of classroom material and helping them with their interactive journals are some of my most treasured memories of my time at Connecticut College. I would highly encourage those interested in working closely with children to take part in the experience!





ARBO ADVENTURE

Volunteers with Connecticut College's Office of Volunteers in Community Service give second graders from C.B. Jennings Elementary School a tour of the Connecticut College arboretum along with several environmental science lessons as part of the Extended Learning Time initiative at the arboretum, in New London, after school Wednesday, April 13, 2016.

Photo taken by Tim Cook from The Day, April 14, 2016



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