The crowd of approximately 3,000 people enjoyed spectacular spring weather and some 50 free events and activities, including many that showcased the University’s programs, resources, and activities.

An Abraham Lincoln impersonator strolled the campus and read the Gettysburg Address in observance of Lincoln’s 200th birthday, while a Civil War encampment on Gengras lawn added to the historical theme. Members of the University’s President’s College and friends read all 49 poems by Edgar Allan Poe, who was also born 200 years ago.

Children with their faces colorfully painted rode lifelike mechanical animals, cuddled live animals in the petting zoo, and jumped just for the sheer joy of it in the bounce houses. Visitors filled the Gray Center Amphitheater for an outdoor concert by the Taubl family, who finished among the top 20 finalists on last summer’s hit NBC show, America’s Got Talent. The musical family includes two current Hartt School students and a Hartt alumna.

At top, Safari Bob Meyer takes Emma Quinn, 4 1/2, and Molly O’Keefe, 4, for a ride on the elephant; below left, the brothers of Zeta Beta Tau rolled a giant ball around campus collecting signatures to support the Children’s Miracle Network and cancer research; below right, Adonis LaFleur, 3, enjoys the petting zoo.
Two Colleges Welcome New Leadership
HARTT AND ENHP NAME NEW DEANS

Two new deans will join the University community on June 30. Aaron A. Flagg (left), a professional trumpet player and music educator who is executive director of the Music Conservatory of Westchester in White Plains, N.Y., has been named dean of The Hartt School. Ralph O. Mueller (right), a quantitative research methodologist and faculty member at The George Washington University in Washington, D.C., has been named dean of the College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions (ENHP).

Dean Flagg

Flagg has a dynamic career as a performer, music administrator, and music educator. As a professional trumpet player, he has performed in solo recitals and with orchestras, chamber groups, and jazz ensembles. He received his undergraduate and master's degrees from The Juilliard School in New York City and his doctorate from the University of Michigan.

At the Music Conservatory of Westchester, Flagg oversaw all aspects of this community school of the arts, including its individual and group instruction in music, musical theatre, music therapy for all ages, arts-in-education programs for area schools, summer programs, and the Live on Central concert series. He directed the school's strategic planning process, secured the largest donation in the school's history, and added innovative programs like a vocal academy and a hip-hop ensemble.

"I am honored to have been chosen to help lead The Hartt School at the University of Hartford. The history of excellence in music, the addition of theatre and dance divisions, the strength of the Community Division, and the excitement around the Handel Performing Arts Center all create an incredible opportunity to brand a unique educational experience," Flagg said about his appointment.

Prior to his years in Westchester, Flagg was on the graduate faculty of The Juilliard school and served as its director of education outreach. While there, he developed eight educational and community outreach programs, including college fellowships in interactive performance and teaching and community engagement initiatives.

Flagg has been a teaching artist for 15 years with organizations that include the Lincoln Center Institute, Carnegie Hall Education, New York Philharmonic Education, Memphis Arts Council, Guggenheim Museum, and the New York City Opera. He has been a panelist and presenter for the National Endowment for the Arts, Chamber Music America, Bank of America Excellence in Orchestra Education, Mellon Foundation, Massachusetts Arts Council, the Joyce Foundation, Polyphonic.org, and the Center for Arts Education.

Dean Mueller

Mueller holds professorial rank in the Graduate School of Education and Human Development and the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration at The George Washington University.

In addition to his teaching responsibilities, he served six years as chair of the Department of Educational Leadership at the university and was responsible for educational, research, outreach, personnel, and financial matters of the unit. During his stewardship, the department grew by roughly one-third to almost 60 full- and part-time faculty members serving more than 800 graduate students in seven program areas. Mueller led the faculty through strategic planning and review, initiated schoolwide curriculum reforms, and held institution-wide leadership positions in the faculty senate and on other critical university committees.

"I am excited about building on retiring Dean Dorothy Zeiser's many accomplishments and furthering the goal of shaping ENHP into a college known regionally and nationally for its demonstrated commitments to student learning, community engagement, and scholarship of the highest quality," said Mueller about becoming dean.

Mueller was selected as a 2007–08 American Council on Education (ACE) Fellow and acquired enhanced leadership experience in vision formulation, strategic planning, advancement, and accreditation while participating in ACE leadership seminars and site visits across the United States and South Africa.

He has served as a consultant and reviewer for agencies such as the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education, and the World Bank, and serves on the boards of several prominent methodological and applied journals. He has been an active leader in such professional organizations as the American Educational Research Association and continues to offer professional-development seminars on data analysis to national and international audiences.

Mueller came to the United States from Germany as a rotary International Scholar and subsequently received bachelor’s and master’s degrees in mathematics from Elon and Wake Forest universities, respectively, and a PhD in educational research and evaluation from Virginia Polytechnic Institute.
The Joseloff Gallery’s current exhibition, through June 28, brings together sculpture, drawings, and paintings by internationally acclaimed artist Nancy Graves—including some significant examples of her work from various phases of her career.

Graves, who died in 1995 of cancer, is considered one of the most innovative, inspired, and prolific artists of her generation.

A native of Pittsfield, Mass., the artist created a sensation in the art world in 1969 with her life-size, lifelike, handmade sculptures of camels at a show at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City. That show was the first solo exhibition by a woman artist at the museum. In the early 1970s she concentrated on drawings, watercolors, and paintings, many of them based on maps, the sea floor, and the surface of the moon.

She is best known for vibrantly painted sculpture collages from the 1980s combining elements of nature—bronze casts of leaves, insects, crab claws, berries, and vegetables—along with rope, tools, and myriad household objects. A world traveler with interests in anthropology, paleontology, and archaeology, Graves also incorporated elements of other cultures and other times into her work.

Each piece’s source of support was an integral part of the sculpture, and issues of balance, weight, and counterbalance became important. The method of direct casting that Graves developed subverted the weightiness and rigidity of bronze, giving the illusion of fragility and lightness.

The exhibition is funded by the Kohn/Joseloff Foundation and is made possible through the Nancy Graves Foundation in New York, N.Y.
On Campus

Dr. Avital Fast (left) of the Montefiore Medical Center in New York demonstrates the recently patented Ambulatory Suspension and Rehabilitation Apparatus.

Back on Their Feet
CETA RECEIVES PATENT FOR NEW THERAPY DEVICE

It recently got easier for patients recovering from strokes and injuries to walk again.

After a nine-year journey that began at a medical center in New York City, the College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture (CETA) received word in December 2008 that its patent application had been approved for a groundbreaking physical therapy device developed at the University of Hartford.

The Ambulatory Suspension and Rehabilitation Apparatus (U.S. patent no. 7,462,138) is an answer to a problem Dr. Avital Fast of the Montefiore Medical Center had seen all too often.

“Patients were sent to me by their insurance companies,” he says. “They had fallen and injured themselves during physical therapy. We had to find a way to prevent this. The suspension system holds patients upright in a harness while they learn to walk again and in case of falls. I came up with the idea. The University made it happen.”

Devdas Shetty, CETA’s professor of mechanical engineering and director of the University’s Engineering Applications Center, collaborated with the college’s research engineer, Claudio Campana, and teams of engineering students over the years to develop the system. It is the only patented device that allows patients to walk backward and forward and up and down stairs to build strength. It also relieves the physical burden on therapists of trying to support the patients or catch them if they start to fall.

A prototype of the device is in use at the Montefiore Medical Center/Albert Einstein College of Medicine, where Fast is chair of the physical medicine and rehabilitation department.

The next step is finding a manufacturer for the device, which will be marketed to hospitals and rehabilitation centers.

An Evening with Hank Jones
Hartt faculty, students, and alumni in concert with jazz great

Legendary jazz pianist Hank Jones received an honorary Doctor of Music from the University on April 13 prior to an evening performance in Lincoln Theater with students, alumni, and faculty from The Hartt School’s Jackie McLean Institute of Jazz. Earlier in the day, Jones, a prolific American jazz pianist, bandleader, and composer, gave a jazz master class that was open to the public.

Jones, who is celebrating his 90th birthday year, has been a top pianist since the days of swing and bebop. He has recorded more than 60 albums under his own name and as a guest artist with countless others, including Charlie Parker and Ella Fitzgerald. In February 2009 the Recording Academy honored him with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the 51st Annual Grammy Awards. Former President George W. and Mrs. Laura Bush awarded him the 2008 National Medal of Arts.

A National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master, Jones’s many other honors and titles include inclusion in the International Jazz Hall of Fame and the Living Legend Jazz Wall of Fame as well as a Congressional Achievement Award.
When Nelson Ebo ’12 performed his first solo opera recital in New Hampshire this past March, you would never know from listening to his powerful tenor voice and seemingly effortless delivery how difficult his journey was to that stage. The 24-year-old earned the recital by winning the prestigious Lakes Region Opera Idol competition in New Hampshire in November 2008.

Ebo and his 14 brothers and sisters grew up in the Republic of Angola in south-central Africa during the Angolan Civil War (1975–2002), which took the lives of some 500,000 people. When he was 13 years old, his family moved into a seminary to try to escape the violence. That’s where he discovered opera, thanks to music CDs belonging to the priests.

Ebo listened to famous tenors Luciano Pavarotti and Plácido Domingo, writing out the words phonetically because he did not speak Italian. After listening to the music just a few times, he was surprised to discover he could sing along with the opera legends.

“When I was in my room and I tried to sing opera, my family thought I was crazy,” Ebo says with a laugh. “They had never heard that kind of voice.”

Ebo fondly recalls those moments when his family was together. By the time he was 17, he had lost his mother and nine of his siblings to violence or disease. Two sisters and a brother died of tuberculosis with Ebo by their sides. His father died when he was 21.

At first, opera became a refuge from the hardships of life. But soon Ebo realized singing was a way to help his family. Already working as a fisherman for food, he began singing at a restaurant to earn more money.

One night, Alfonso Barragues, a United Nations human rights officer, visited the restaurant and heard Ebo sing. Barragues, an opera fan, sensed there was something special about the young tenor and invited him to listen to an opera recording. Barragues was amazed when Ebo sang along the second time he heard it.

“His voice was definitely more captivating than the tenor’s on the recording,” says Barragues. “In that very moment, I realized I was in front of a natural prodigy.”

Barragues helped Ebo secure a scholarship to Carlos III University in Madrid, Spain. At the age of 16, he made the difficult decision to leave Angola and his family to study opera. While in Madrid, Ebo was invited to sing for the king of Spain and one of his idols, Plácido Domingo.

“He was a very nice guy, very good to me,” Ebo says simply of Domingo. “He liked my voice.”

Ebo stayed in Spain for eight years, eventually deciding to come to the United States to study. While he was spending some time in New Jersey, a friend suggested Ebo audition at The Hartt School. He traveled to Hartford and sang for Wayne Rivera, Hartt’s chair of opera performance.

“The first thing you are impressed with is his amazing voice,” says Rivera. “That is coupled with a musical soul. Nelson is a person who is able to put a lot of the hurt he’s experienced in life into his singing.”

Ebo enrolled in Hartt’s vocal studies program in fall 2008 with the goal of becoming a famous opera singer. Add to that the fact that his surviving siblings are depending on him for support since none of them has steady employment. It is a lot of pressure, but Ebo says opera helps him get through the difficult times.

“I’m a very happy person,” he explains with a smile. “I don’t like to feel sad because I lost a lot of people. I try to get my mind off it and try laughing and singing. That helps me a lot.”

How Opera Helps a Hartt Student Cope with a Tragic Past

By Meagan Fazio

The Power of Song
On Campus

Keeping the Dream Alive

More than 600 people attended an event called “Keeping the Dream Alive,” held in Lincoln Theater in observance of Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday. The event took place on the eve of Barack Obama’s inauguration as the nation’s first African American president. President Walter Harrison, who introduced the keynote speaker, Joan Countryman, described Obama’s election as “a seminal moment in our history.”

Countryman, a noted educational leader and author, came out of retirement in 2006 to serve as interim head of the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls in South Africa. She held the position until the school opened in 2007. Countryman urged the members of the audience to work for change.

“Let’s make sure this election is not the end of what we do to change America, but the beginning. [Obama’s] invitation—to join one another to seek a better world for our time—keeps the dream alive.”

The planning committee for the event held an essay contest this year, asking students at the University of Hartford Magnet School, the University of Hartford High School of Science and Engineering, and the University of Hartford to answer the question “What is the status of Dr. Martin Luther King’s dream in 2009?” The winners of the contest are pictured at left.

The program also included musical performances by members of the University of Hartford Gospel Choir, a student chorus from the University of Hartford Magnet School, and Hartt School alumna Brandee Younger ’06, who played Duke Ellington’s “Come Sunday” on the harp.

A Blueprint for Growth

UNIVERSITY IS DEVELOPING 10-YEAR FACILITIES MASTER PLAN

With an eye toward the future, the University has begun developing a facilities master plan that will serve as a blueprint for growth and maintenance of the campus over the next 10 years.

According to Norman Young, executive director of facilities the University has four main goals for the new plan: to optimize the use of space on campus; to define opportunities for physical growth; to maximize the impact of capital expenditures; and to promote a culture of sustainability.

The University has hired the S/L/A/M/ Collaborative of Glastonbury, Conn., to develop the plan, together with a steering committee made up of students, faculty, regents, and University administrators. John Harris, a University regent, is the committee’s chair.

In late December the University began preliminary work, including an inventory of space on campus and an inspection of existing facilities. In April members of the University community had the opportunity to provide input on what should be included in the plan.

A final report, including an implementation plan and finalized concepts, is due at the start of the fall 2009 semester.

The University’s 2000 master plan paved the way for new facilities on campus, including the Integrated Science, Engineering, and Technology complex; new athletic fields; the Renée Samuels Center at the Hartford Art School; Hawk Hall first-year dorm; and the Mort and Irma Handel Performing Arts Center.
On Campus

Abheypur Update

During the 2009 winter term break in January, Natacha Poggio, assistant professor in the Hartford Art School, and five of her students joined Associate Professor David Pines from the College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture (CETA) and six engineering students on a trip to Abheypur, India. Also along was an assessment team lead by Marcia Hughes, assistant director of the Center for Social Research at the University.

Two years ago students in a sophomore design class in CETA designed a solar-power groundwater pump and storage system for a girls’ primary school in Abheypur. Since then, that pump and a water-storage system have been successfully installed, and the program has grown to include other projects and other schools and colleges at the University as well as the Hartford professional chapter of Engineers Without Borders.

This time around, the engineering students had come to install a rooftop rainwater-harvesting system to supply clean drinking water during the monsoon season when the solar panels would be less effective. The art students had created a visual campaign to help educate the villagers on water use and respect for the new technology. Hughes’s assessment team interviewed villagers to determine the impact of the solar well project on their lives.

Once their van arrived in the village, the students spilled out and headed in different directions. On the roof of the girls’ school, student engineers assembled pieces of the recapture system while the design students began painting a mural on another building. The mural featured a smiling water-drop character called Droppy. Jessica (Parker) Hu, a senior majoring in media arts in the Hartford Art School, says she was profoundly affected by her involvement in the project.

“After being involved in the Water for India project, I know that I want to work in that type of relationship with others while trying to learn more about our expansive and beautiful world.”

Sustainability Efforts on Campus

Students, faculty, and staff started off Earth Week on April 20 by participating in the semiannual Hog River Cleanup, now in its 25th year. Organized by Wick Griswold, assistant professor of sociology in Hillyer College, the cleanup calls attention to the careless attitude of some toward the environment. After collecting bags of trash and items like TV sets and computers, participants made sure that the material was properly disposed.

On April 21, Suisman Lounge in Gengras Student Union featured a display of 50,000 cigarette butts—all collected during the spring semester by students in Griswold’s Social Solutions class. Called the No Butts campaign, the display also provided information on why cigarette smoking is a health hazard to people and the planet. Griswold brings environmental issues into the classroom and pairs them with service-learning experiences for his students.

On Earth Day itself, Gengras lawn was the site of the Environmental Earth Fair, sponsored by the Faculty Senate Environment and Sustainability Committee, which is working with the University to find ways to incorporate sustainability into our curriculum, our interaction with vendors and suppliers, and our physical space. Displays at the fair sought to raise awareness about the use of bottled water and its impact on the environment and the amount of recyclable material that is tossed out in the dorms. The “Stash It, Don’t Trash It” campaign urges students to donate to charity the unwanted contents of their dorm rooms when they move out in the spring instead of putting items in dumpsters.