2010 MLK Day

CONNECTICUT STATE TREASURER DENISE NAPPIER IS KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Hundreds of University personnel and community members came together in Lincoln Theater for the University’s Martin Luther King Jr. Day observance. The fourth annual “Keeping the Dream Alive” program included music, readings from King’s speeches, and the words of keynote speaker, Connecticut State Treasurer Denise Nappier (Hon. ’06).

Vocal performances by Hartt School students Nelson Ebo ’12 and Aja Wilson ’10 were well received by the audience. Ebo sang “No Puede Ser” and “Give Me Jesus”; Wilson performed “Lift Every Voice and Sing.” Also part of the musical selections was the Honors Chorus of Martin Luther King Elementary School in Hartford, who sang “Who Would Imagine a King.” Students from the University of Hartford Magnet School on campus presented readings of some of King’s most inspirational words.

Nappier, the first African American woman elected to serve as a state treasurer in the United States, began her remarks by discussing the devastation in earthquake-ravaged Haiti and how the world’s compassionate response is in line with King’s thoughts on the meaning of a “beloved community.” She then reflected on how King’s life and message had a profound effect on her and many others. Nappier also discussed how Barack Obama, the nation’s first African American president, owes much to King’s “legacy of advocating for fairness in our society.”

For the second year, the winners of the Martin Luther King Essay Contest were recognized at the event. Students were asked to write a letter to President Barack Obama explaining how Dr. Martin Luther King’s teachings address one of today’s issues. The winners were Biliana Mihaylova ’10 of the University of Hartford, Nigel Lovan Francis (12th grade) of University High School of Science and Engineering, and Haleigh Stewart (4th grade) and Daniella Angulo-Chang (5th grade) of the University of Hartford Magnet School.

Outside Gengras, visitors found a mobile petting zoo, a performance of The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe by Dramatic Personae, and the always popular opportunity to “Be an Anchor” at the University’s television studio, among other activities.

Some of the day’s options featured a Mark Twain theme in recognition of the 175th anniversary of the birth of the Hartford icon and the 100th anniversary of his death. An actor portraying Mark Twain gave several performances during the course of the day and participated in the President’s College-sponsored marathon reading of Mark Twain’s Tom Sawyer.

Old-time trolley rides took attendees to University High School of Science and Engineering, where students and teachers demonstrated student-built robots and other projects.

“Fortunately, Community Day’s reputation has grown to the point where families are coming back year after year, regardless of weather,” said Jonathan Easterbrook ’87, M’90, director of marketing communication for the University and the founder and organizer of Community Day.

Now in its eighth year, Community Day brings the University’s neighbors from throughout Greater Hartford to campus and helps increase awareness of the rich array of programs, activities, and resources that the University offers.
Observer

If the Shoe Fits…
FOUNDER OF TOMS SHOES DISCUSSES HIs UNIQUE BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY

Blake Mycoskie founded TOMS Shoes, Inc., with the promise that for every pair of shoes sold, he would give a pair to a child in need. In just three years, this business model resulted in more than 140,000 pairs of new shoes being donated to children around the world.

Mycoskie, the founder and “chief shoe giver” of TOMS Shoes, discussed his unique business philosophy at the Barney School’s annual Ellsworth Lecture on April 6.

“Using the purchasing power of individuals to benefit the greater good is what we’re all about,” says Mycoskie. “The TOMS One-for-One business model transforms our customers into benefactors, which allows us to grow a truly sustainable business rather than depending on fundraising for support.”

Many people became familiar with TOMS Shoes when Mycoskie starred in a commercial for AT&T. The commercial has received thousands of hits on YouTube.

Embodying the entrepreneurial spirit of a new generation, the 32-year-old Mycoskie has created five businesses since college. An avid reader and traveler, he lives on a sailboat in Los Angeles, Calif.

The Ellsworth Lecture program promotes an awareness of and appreciation for the American business system. It was created in 1979 by Ensign-Bickford Industries, Inc., to honor its former chairman, the late John E. Ellsworth. ■

Bestselling Author Kelly Corrigan Comes to Lincoln Theater

Just two days after her newest book, Lift, became available in stores, bestselling author and YouTube sensation Kelly Corrigan discussed it with an appreciative audience in Lincoln Theater.

Corrigan, whose earlier book, The Middle Place (Voice, 2008), spent 24 weeks on The New York Times bestseller list, came to campus on March 4 as part of the Rogow Distinguished Visiting Lecturers Program, in partnership with the Women’s Education and Leadership Fund. Corrigan’s lecture also was the opening event in Hartford College for Women’s reunion weekend, “A Home Coming for Women 2010.”

Corrigan discussed and read passages from Lift and The Middle Place, answered questions from the audience, and signed copies of the books for enthusiastic fans.

Written as a letter to her children, Corrigan’s Lift (Hyperion, 2010) weaves together three true and unforgettable stories of adults willing to experience emotional hazards in exchange for the gratifications of raising children. The book is described as “a tender, intimate, and robust portrait of risk and love; a touchstone for anyone who wants to live more fully.”

Corrigan’s bestseller, The Middle Place, describes “that sliver of time when parenthood and childhood overlap.” At 36, she had a marriage that worked; a couple of funny, active kids; and a weekly newspaper column—and all the while felt as though she remained comfortably wedged between her adult duties and her parents’ care.

In addition to being a bestselling author, Corrigan also is a YouTube sensation. A video of Corrigan reading her essay, “Transcending: Words on Women and Strength,” has received more than 4.6 million hits. ■
The University of Hartford celebrated its 53rd birthday on Feb. 21, with a variety of Founders Day festivities, culminating in a colorful birthday party at the Sports Center.

The University began observing Founders Day on Feb. 21, 2007, its 50th anniversary. Five decades earlier, on Feb. 21, 1957, a bill incorporating the new University of Hartford was unanimously approved by the Connecticut General Assembly and signed by Gov. Abraham Ribicoff, clearing the way for the merger of Hillyer College, Hartt School of Music, and the Hartford Art School.

For each of the past four years, the University has observed Feb. 21 with a variety of festivities designed to bring together the University community and celebrate its spirit.

This year's events included a Founders Day women's basketball game against Boston University (the Hawks won, 61–38). During halftime, three finalists competed in the Jeopardy-style championship round of the University of Hartford Trivia Challenge on the floor of Chase Arena. Alumnus Mark Vining ’82 won the first prize of two round-trip airline tickets to Florida, courtesy of A&S Travel Center.

The Feb. 21 women's basketball game also was a Pink Zone game, in which 50 percent of all ticket sales were donated to the Comprehensive Breast Health Center at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center in Hartford. Hartford Athletics presented a check for $7,204 to Paul Pendergast, president of Saint Francis Foundation, at halftime. Connecticut Gov. M. Jodi Rell, a breast cancer survivor, attended the game, took part in a ceremonial "first tip," and helped award prizes to the Trivia Challenge finalists.

For those whose interests lay more in the arts than on the basketball court, Founders Day 2010 offered several options. Campus visitors had an opportunity to take in a performance of Brian Friel's play, Translations, at the Handel Performing Arts Center, or a Hartt School faculty recital in the Fuller Music Center.

The day's events culminated with a Founders Day birthday party in the auxiliary gym at the Sports Center, complete with cupcakes, ice cream, party hats, balloons, and a performance by the student a cappella group L'Shir.

Happy birthday, University of Hartford—and best wishes for a great 54th year!
PeaceJam and Nobel Laureate Welcomed to Campus

Approximately 300 high school students from all over the Northeast were on campus March 26–28 to attend the 2010 PeaceJam Northeast Youth Conference. Throughout the weekend, the students took part in workshops, community service projects, performances, and other programs. Some 50 college students, at least half of whom were University of Hartford students, served as mentors to the students.

PeaceJam is an international movement that brings young people together with Nobel Peace Laureates to inspire and educate them about becoming leaders who work for social justice and peace in the world.

Adolfo Pérez Esquivel was this year’s Nobel Laureate in attendance. He received a Nobel Peace Prize in 1980 for his leadership in promoting fundamental human rights and true democracy for the people of Latin America. Prior to Esquivel’s lecture, the University conferred on him an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters.

A native of Argentina, Esquivel was one of thousands of “Desaparecidos.” Imprisoned and tortured for 14 months by the Argentine military junta, he was finally released when Amnesty International declared him the 1978 International Political Prisoner of the Year. Esquivel continues to campaign for debt relief for lesser developed countries and to focus on breaking the cycle of violence endured by those who live in extreme poverty.

More Than $9,000 for Haiti Quake Relief

Faculty, staff, and students at the University have responded generously in the wake of the Jan. 12, 2010, earthquake that devastated Haiti by raising $8,600 through the Center for Community Service on campus.

The funds, which were collected during a variety of on-campus events throughout the spring semester, will be donated to Oxfam International and the Connecticut Haitian American Organization.

In February the Center for Community Service sponsored the “Hartford for Haiti Benefit Concert,” which was held in Lincoln Theater. The Student Government Association held a second benefit concert, “Light the Pathway of Hope,” in February in Gengras Café. Both concerts featured student performers. The Center also collected funds at the University’s annual Community Day event in April.

Other fundraisers included a “practice-a-thon” organized by The Hartt School Community Division and an event sponsored by the Campus Activities Team—“Some Blues, Some Jazz & Some Soul Food”—in honor of Black History month. In addition, student-athletes sold “Hawks 4 Haiti” headbands at home basketball and lacrosse games.

Barney School students in Assistant Professor Linda Cohen’s Leadership in the 21st Century class raised an additional $550 for Haiti relief as a class project. Their funds are being donated to Save the Children’s Haiti Quake Disaster efforts.

“One thing about the Haiti campaign is that faculty, staff, and students alike came together to work on it and support its formation. It’s been a great process,” says Matt Blocker, director of the Center for Community Service.

L–r: Student and volunteer coordinator Adrian Alexis Ruiz ’10, in back; Emma Heinz-Goldberg and Matt Blocker of the Center for Community Service; and student volunteer Alana Blake.
Goldfarb Purchase Award Winners

Two Hartford Art School students won top honors in February at the 21st annual Alexander A. Goldfarb Student Exhibition in the Joseloff Gallery.

Kevin Kelly, a senior majoring in media arts, and Sara Allen, a senior ceramics major, won this year’s Alexander A. Goldfarb Purchase Awards. Kelly received the Purchase Award for his high-definition video titled Directions, and Allen won the award for her ceramic and mixed-media piece, Memories of Sisters: Similar and Divergent.

Each year, two student artists are selected to receive Purchase Awards in the amount of $1,000 each, made possible through the Alexander A. Goldfarb Endowment Trust. The winning students’ artwork becomes part of the University’s permanent collection.

The annual exhibition and awards are open to all undergraduate and graduate students of the University of Hartford. Each year, students are invited to enter their finest work, which is juried by a professional in the visual arts.

The juror for this year’s show was Clinton Jukkala, Yale University assistant professor of painting/printmaking and director of undergraduate studies in art.

New MFA in Photography Is a Hit!

The first cohort of the Hartford Art School’s new Master of Fine Arts in Photography program will be on campus for two weeks this summer. World-famous photographer Robert Lyons, whose work has been exhibited throughout the United Stated and Europe, has developed and will direct the limited-residency program with an international scope.

Lyons has designed the independent, tutorial-based program for the engaged professional interested in investigating art, documentary practice, and the photo-based book. It will also appeal to recent graduates who wish to facilitate their professional credentials as artists and educators.

Already the new degree program has drawn faculty and students from around the world. Its emphasis is for students to produce a strong body of work with an accompanying publication, and learn the pedagogical forms and methods that can be used in teaching photography.

Students attend the program over three summers and four academic-year semesters. Each summer session takes place at the University of Hartford for an intensive, two-week period, during which students and faculty interact inside and outside the classroom. In addition, during the fall and spring sessions, the class meets at off-site locations—such as New York City, Berlin/Leipzig, and other photography hubs—for an intensive, seven-day period.

Between official sessions, students are in regular contact with their thesis advisors. The program has a full 60-credit curriculum but allows students to participate without leaving their studios for the majority of the time.

“I am pleased that the Hartford Art School has embraced my vision for this program and that President Harrison and the board of regents are behind its innovative approach to higher education,” says Lyons. “I feel we are at the forefront with the international limited-residency MFA program, which has . . . attracted a very high caliber of MFA candidates. I look forward to our beginning this summer.”

The roster of faculty includes Hartford Art School Professor Mary Frey, Joerg Colberg of the blog “Conscientious,” Doug Dubois, Adam Bartos, Alice Rose George, Hellen Van Meene, Alec Soth, Marc Joseph Berg, and others. For more information, visit the MFA Photography homepage and www.hartford.edu/graduate/programs.
Observer

Scholarship recipients were introduced to their benefactors at the Ninth Annual Scholarship Appreciation Luncheon. Student speakers were Wilfreda Tilley ’10 and Miguel Angel Vaszquez ’12.

Tilley received The Hartford Nursing Career Track: Pre-Nursing to BSN Scholarship established by Claire and the late Millard Pryor. Originally from Kenya, where her birth family still lives, she will be the first member of her family to earn a college degree at Commencement this year.

Tilley lives in Bloomfield, Conn., with her husband, who is pursuing a master’s degree at the University, and her son, a high school freshman. She works at Hartford Hospital in the cardiovascular unit and volunteers at My Sister’s Place in Hartford, Conn., where she works with victims of domestic violence.

Vaszquez, whose parents live in Waterbury, Conn., has been singing in church since the age of four but received no private instruction in voice until his last year of high school, where he was president of the choir and was involved in other activities and clubs.

A student of Hartt faculty member Michele McBride, Vasquez has since performed with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra under the baton of conductor Willie Waters. He says he also enjoys acting in community theater and has participated in a number of music festivals, including the New England Music Festival, where he was both the number-one baritone and the featured soloist.

The luncheon was attended by more than 200 scholarship donors and student recipients, and gave both groups an opportunity to meet and learn about each other. The 1877 Club on the University’s Bloomfield Avenue campus was the site of the event, held on April 4, 2010.

The University of Hartford has received a $2.4 million federal grant to develop miniaturized autonomous (unmanned) aerial vehicles (UAVs). The largest research grant in University history, it will be used to help the U.S. Army develop the technologies needed to create a new generation of small surveillance systems.

Dean Lou Manzione of the College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture has been working to secure the project for close to a year and a half. The device, which will be about the size of a soda can, will be multifunctional—able, for example, to transmit video over long distances in real time, provide a forward listening post, and sense dangerous conditions such as gases, radiation, or explosives nearby.

“It’s a very aggressive target size,” says Manzione, pointing out that the Predator—the military’s workhorse unmanned aerial vehicle currently being used in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere—is too large to fit in a two-car garage.

The University is the lead institution in a partnership with the University of Connecticut, the University of Bridgeport, and the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology, Inc., as well as select area companies that will provide vital expertise to the effort.

“Autonomous technologies such as these are an excellent interdisciplinary learning device for the engineering profession,” adds Manzione, “and they enjoy tremendous student interest as one of the most important 21st-century technologies.”

According to John J. Carson ’65, vice president of University relations, the awarding of the grant to the University received strong support from U.S. Congressman John B. Larson, who provided the direct sponsorship; U.S. Senators Christopher Dodd and Joseph Lieberman; and the highest levels of the Army Research Command.

Manzione says he expects that an early prototype will be developed by the group within the next 18 months.
A HAPPY DAY

Commencement 2010

The Observer went to press in late April. Lacking a time machine, we could not include coverage of the University’s 53rd Commencement on May 16 in this issue. Instead, we’re providing preview information about the speaker, two graduating seniors, one alumnus, five faculty members, and four honorary degree recipients who are to be given special recognition that day.

The Commencement speaker is our own Jennifer Rizzotti, coach of the University of Hartford’s women’s basketball team. In her 11 years at the University, Rizzotti has built the program into a nationally recognized America East power, winning four regular-season championships and four tournament championships, and making five trips to the NCAA Tournament. She has been honored three times as the America East Coach of the Year.

The University will present honorary doctoral degrees to Hartford Archbishop Henry J. Mansell, Senior U.S. District Judge Ellen Bree Burns, psychologist and educator Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, and Grammy Award–winning composer William Bolcom. The student speaker is Taryn Brandt, a Class of 2010 psychology major with a 3.92 grade point average.

Graduating senior Adrian Alexis Ruiz will receive the Belle K. Ribicoff Prize, which recognizes academic excellence. He has a 3.95 grade point average and will attend medical school in the fall. Neftali Torres is a student leader, researcher, and community volunteer who has maintained a 3.93 grade point average as a civil engineering major. He will receive the John G. Lee Medal, awarded each year to a graduating senior from Greater Hartford who has excelled academically and demonstrated a deep commitment to the community.

John Feierabend is professor and director of the Music Education Division as well as chair of undergraduate music education at The Hartt School. One of the country’s leading authorities on music-and-movement development in early childhood, he will receive the James E. and Frances W. Bent Award for Scholarly and/or Artistic Creativity. The Roy E. Larson Award for Excellence in Teaching will go to Robert L. Duran, a professor of communication in the College of Arts and Sciences. Mentoring students has been the hallmark of Duran’s 28-year teaching career at the University, whether the setting is in the classroom or in a residential community across campus.

Susan Coleman, professor of finance in the Barney School of Business, will receive the Oscar and Shoshana Trachtenberg Award for Sustained Service to the University. From serving on a wide range of committees to promoting financial literacy among students to developing partnerships with educational institutions in China, Coleman’s efforts on behalf of the University have been remarkable. The recipient of the Donald W. Davis All-University Curriculum Award will be Donn Weinholz, professor and chair of the Department of Educational Leadership in the College of Education, Nursing and Health Services. Among his many accomplishments is his participation in the All-University Curriculum for 18 years, teaching four courses and helping to develop two, including the long-running Gender, Identity, and Society.

Catharine (Cat) Balco, assistant professor of painting and drawing in the Hartford Art School, will receive the Belle K. Ribicoff Junior Faculty Prize, which carries with it a $10,000 award. Balco is the second recipient of the prize. Established with a generous gift from Ribicoff, it recognizes an outstanding junior faculty member in a tenure-track position who has not yet been tenured.

Also on the platform on May 15 will be Kathy Behrens ’85, who is receiving the Distinguished Alumni Award. Behrens is executive vice president of social responsibility and player programs for the National Basketball Association. She oversees a group that manages league and player social responsibility efforts, supports player growth and development, and enhances marketing opportunities for current and former players.