There’s No Place Like Home

The construction phase of the university’s $10 million Home Field Advantage (HFA) project got off to a festive start on April 20, with a celebratory groundbreaking behind the Sports Center.

Regents, donors, and many current and former student-athletes joined with civic leaders, friends, and staff of the Department of Athletics to launch the long-awaited construction of new outdoor sports facilities at the university.

“I know how special having a home field is,” said Katie Gardiner ’05, who spoke at the groundbreaking. Gardiner played on the women’s soccer team for four years at Al-Marzook Field, which is badly in need of repairs. “The memories that will always stay with me have to do with the field itself—the ambience of a Friday night game under the lights…the smell of the grass and hot dogs, hearing all of our fellow athletes screaming and cheering for us.”

Phase I of the construction will include renovation of the existing Al-Marzook Field for soccer and lacrosse, relocation and construction of the softball field, and construction of a baseball field. The renovation of Al-Marzook Field is scheduled for completion in early August, in time for fall 2005 competition. Construction of the baseball and softball fields will be completed in November 2005 for spring 2006 competition.

Phase II of the HFA project will consist of the construction of a running track surrounding an all-purpose playing field.

One of the most significant aspects of the project will be the baseball field construction. The university’s baseball team has been playing without a home field since 1985. So-called home games are played primarily at Memorial Field in Simsbury and Muzzy Field in Bristol; practices take place at St. Thomas Seminary, just north of the main campus on Bloomfield Avenue.

“Our home field embodies the passion, pride, and overwhelming sense of community at this school. Every Division One athlete has a right to be in love with their home field,” Gardiner said. “Now every team at Hartford will be provided with this opportunity because of all of you.”

Guests at the groundbreaking ceremony included West Hartford Mayor Scott Slifka; Home Field Advantage Campaign Co-Chairs Robert Forrester ’66 and Gary LaRocque ’75; and Tom Reich, who, together with his wife Suzy Reich, are the lead donors to the campaign. Besides Forrester and LaRocque, another former student-athlete in attendance was Ed Gombieski ’56, a former Hawks basketball player who traveled from Dallas to be at the groundbreaking ceremony.

No one has been waiting longer for the new fields than A. Peter LoMaglio, athletics director at Hartford from 1949 to 1970, who told the crowd he struggled for years with inadequate athletics fields. LoMaglio said he is thrilled that student-athletes will now have the facilities they deserve.

Breaking ground for the new athletics fields are (l-r) West Hartford Mayor Scott Slifka, Tom Reich, Bob Forrester ’66, Katie Gardiner ’05, Gary LaRocque ’75, President Walter Harrison, Athletics Director Pat Meiser-McKnott, and Howie the Hawk.
Kresge Foundation Awards $700,000 Challenge Grant

The university has been selected to receive a highly competitive $700,000 challenge grant from The Kresge Foundation for the Home Field Advantage athletics fields project.

Ground was broken this spring for Phase I of the project (see page 21), which involves the renovation and relocation of the university’s existing athletics fields and construction of a new baseball field.

“The Kresge Foundation award is a validation of our recent successes and our vision for the future of this institution,” said university President Walter Harrison. “It is gratifying to know we prevailed through such a rigorous and selective process. I am confident that our alumni and others will respond to the challenge.”

Because it is a challenge grant, the university will need to raise more than $2.7 million within the next 15 months in order to receive the $700,000 grant commitment. With the Kresge Foundation award, the university will have raised 60 percent of its $6.68 million goal for the Home Field Advantage campaign.

In 2004, The Kresge Foundation made awards to only 28 percent of applicants (175 of 636). The awards were given to charitable organizations in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and France. Grants are made to institutions in higher education, health and long-term care, arts and humanities, human services, science and the environment, and public affairs.

TV Studio Receives Bonanza

Hollywood producer Kent McCray ’51—who teamed up with the late Michael Landon to produce the popular TV series Bonanza, Little House on the Prairie, and Highway to Heaven—has donated and pledged a total of $100,000 to the University of Hartford television studio.

“Our students will leave here better equipped to begin careers in television because of Kent McCray,” said Television Studio Manager Dan McNamara. “It is especially meaningful to be receiving this support from someone with such impressive television credentials. He is, in many ways, a pioneer in the television industry, and someone who understands the importance of keeping up with the latest advances in technology.”

The $25,000 that McCray has already donated will be used to upgrade the studio’s field equipment, such as cameras and tripods, McNamara says. Much of the remaining $75,000 that McCray has pledged, he says, will be used to begin converting the TV studio to high-definition standards.

In the fall, the facility will be officially renamed the Kent McCray Television Studio.

McCray was born in Hartford, where his father was a member of the management team at WTIC radio for many years. A graduate of The Hartt School, McCray was an alumni regent of the university for 10 years and is now an honorary regent.

Soon after leaving Hartt in 1951, he joined NBC, working on such legendary programs as the Colgate Comedy Hour, The Red Skelton Show, The Ralph Edwards Show, and This Is Your Life. In the later 1950s, he was an associate producer with Bob Hope, accompanying the comedian on many of his overseas USO trips.

McCray’s wife and partner, Susan, a noted casting director, recently was named a university regent. The McCrays have been generous and enthusiastic supporters of the University of Hartford Magnet School (Susan) and the University of Hartford Performing Arts Center. In addition, Kent McCray recently established three endowed scholarships at The Hartt School to support students studying opera, theatre, and musical theatre.
First Ramsey Awards Put Adjunct Faculty in the Spotlight

More than $14,800 in gifts and pledges has been raised to fund the new Gordon Clark Ramsey Awards for Creative Excellence for adjunct and part-time faculty of the university. The awards were created when Ramsey retired last fall, following his 18 years of service as secretary to the Faculty Senate. The Ramsey Award committee is seeking additional donations to reach a goal of $20,000 so that the two annual awards will be self-sustaining.

Ramsey, an adjunct faculty member himself, also continues to serve the university part-time as executive secretary of the Emeriti Association. He has always been a strong advocate of efforts to enhance the status of, and provide opportunities for, adjunct faculty.

“Gordon Ramsey has set a superb example in establishing this award to benefit adjunct and part-time faculty at the university,” said President Walter Harrison. “These faculty members contribute mightily to the lives and education of our students, and Gordon’s award recognizes that contribution in a tangible and important way. We’re all grateful to Gordon, and to the donors to the fund that supports the award, for sharing Gordon’s vision and support of this important segment of our faculty.”

The first two recipients of the new awards are Janell Carroll of the Department of Psychology in the College of Arts and Sciences and Richard Kolk of the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture (CETA).


Kolk, a senior staff engineer in controls and simulation at United Technologies’ Carrier Corporation, has taught at the university for 21 years. His courses are in the areas of control systems and electrical engineering circuits. He is co-author of the textbook, *Mechatronics System Design*, with Devdas Shetty, CETA’s dean of research, professor of mechanical engineering, and the Vernon D. Roosa Professor in Manufacturing Engineering.

Alumni and others wishing to contribute to the Ramsey Award fund should contact Linda Stathers in the Office of Development, 860.768.5112.

HARTFORD SCHOLARS

Curtis St. Brice ’92, ’97, one of the university’s first Hartford Scholar graduates, was a featured guest at the 2005 Annual Scholarship Dinner and Auction this spring. The benefit, supported by the University of Hartford Associates, raised more than $80,000 for the Hartford Scholars program, which provides half-tuition scholarships to Hartford high school graduates who attend the university. A patent engineer for United Technologies’ Otis Elevator company, St. Brice said his life “is an example and catalyst for others to realize their dreams.”