Women’s basketball coach Jennifer Rizzotti (second row, far left) and the Hawks returned to West Hartford the victors after competing in the 29th Jack in the Box Rainbow Wahine Classic at the University of Hawaii, Nov. 23–25. The Hawks captured the championship with a 70-53 win over Virginia. Below: The Chase Arena at the Reich Family Pavilion was filled with fans as Hawk basketball kicked off its 2007-08 season on Oct. 12 at the annual Midnight Mania celebration.

Fan Fest

Men’s basketball coach Dan Leibovitz with his wife, Nancy, and daughter, Kaiya, at the first-ever Hartford Hawks Fan Fest. It was a day of face painting, balloon animals, rafts and a chance to ask a favorite player for an autograph. Both men’s and women’s basketball teams, as well as women’s coach Jennifer Rizzotti, were on hand to talk with fans. At right, Hawks forward Danielle Hood with a young fan.
35 Years Later: A Long Way, Baby
TITLE IX SYMPOSIUM LOOKS AT GENDER EQUITY IN SPORTS

On a remarkable October day when both the space shuttle and the International Space Station were under the command of women, more than 100 collegiate officials, coaches, high school students and others gathered for a symposium on the impact of Title IX on women’s sports.

June 2007 marked the 35th anniversary of the passing of Title IX, the landmark legislation that prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender at educational institutions that receive federal funding. University of Hartford President Walter Harrison and Cheryl Norton, president of Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU), opened the program. Norton discussed historical milestones in women’s athletics since the 1970s; Harrison urged the audience to be vigilant, particularly about what he perceives as a loss of interest in women’s sports among the media.

“College and university sports, especially at the Division I level, are driven by revenue from media contracts,” said Harrison. “If the revenue begins to fall, the non-revenue-producing sports will suffer first.”

Sponsored by the Women in Education and Leadership Fund and L’ORÉAL Paris, the symposium was organized by Jane Barstow, professor of English and vice president of the Connecticut Women’s Hall of Fame. The featured speaker was historian Susan Ware, Charles Warren Center Fellow at Harvard University, who cautioned those in attendance that the “celebration of how much has been achieved must be balanced with what is still left to be done.”

Scott Gray of WTIC-AM 1080 was the moderator of the symposium. Other participants included Hartford Director of Athletics Patricia Meiser; Hawks women’s basketball coach Jennifer Rizzotti; Pat Nicol, SCSU athletics director; and Meghan Burke-Brown, SCSU women’s basketball coach.

Hawks Basketball at Mid-season

As we went to press in early January, both the men’s and women’s basketball teams had just wrapped up their nonconference schedules in preparation for the 16-game America East slate.

The men’s team earned a 73-70 victory over visiting Yale on Jan. 5 to enter America East play with a record of 6-9. The team’s early season schedule was ambitious, as second-year head coach Dan Leibovitz took his Hawks to face the likes of Louisville, Villanova, Brigham Young and Virginia.

Head coach Jennifer Rizzotti’s women’s squad won 10 of 13 nonconference games, including winning the prestigious, eight-team Rainbow Wahine Classic (see p. 20). The Hawks also earned victories over two Big East teams (Providence and St. John’s), ended Marist’s 26-game home winning streak on Dec. 12, and earned their third-ever win over a Top 25 team, defeating then 23rd-ranked Michigan State in a thriller, 54-51, at home on Dec. 22.