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Last month, I was very happy and honored to be invited to Washington to hear Pope Benedict XVI’s address to the presidents of Catholic colleges and universities and other Catholic educators in the United States. While his remarks have been widely reported, I wanted to take this opportunity to share with our alumni and friends my own thoughts and experiences.

The setting was The Catholic University of America, where the president, Father David O’Connell, C.M., an alumnus of Niagara University and a member of our board of trustees, provided a wonderful welcome to the 300 to 400 educators who were present.

The Holy Father began his address in a soft, but very clear and articulate voice. His message was essentially one of hope, reflecting the theme of his visit, “Christ Our Hope.”

The pope emphasized that the works of Catholic education are faith, reason and service, and that our colleges and universities are places where students meet God and come to know and study the good, the true and the beautiful. In keeping with his theme, the Holy Father called our colleges and universities “institutions of hope.”

I was happy and struck that Pope Benedict cited the important work of great leaders of education in the United States such as St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and St. Katharine Drexel. He was very clear about how thankful he was for the dedicated work of educators in our Catholic institutions, which he called “an outstanding apostolate of hope, seeking to address the material and intellectual needs of over three million children and students.” And he noted, “Their long-term sustainability must be assured. Indeed, everything possible must be done, in cooperation with the wider community, to ensure that they are accessible to people of all social and economic strata. No child should be denied his or her right to an education in faith, which in turn nurtures the soul of a nation.”

These words struck me strongly, perhaps because I know of so many Catholic schools and universities, including Niagara, that go to great lengths to make a Catholic education available to everyone, and in some special ways to those who cannot afford a private school education.

Pope Benedict stressed the mission of the Church, that is, evangelization. The pope made it clear that “truths of faith and of reason never contradict one another. The church’s mission, in fact, involves her in humanity’s struggle to arrive at truth. In articulating revealed truth, she serves all members of society by purifying reason, ensuring that it remains open to the consideration of ultimate truths.”

The pope used an interesting phrase, “intellectual charity.” He said, “This aspect of charity calls the educator to recognize that the profound responsibility to lead the young to truth is nothing less than an act of love. Indeed, the dignity of education lies in fostering the true perfection and happiness of those to be educated.”

After the pope’s address, a friend asked what struck me most. I told her that it was the ending in which he emphasized the paramount importance of our professionalism and witness within our Catholic universities and schools. With great care and in a very deliberate voice, he:

- Thanked us profusely for our dedication and generosity and for our selfless contributions — from outstanding research to the dedication of those working in inner-city schools — by which we serve both our country and the church.
- Told the faculty members at Catholic colleges and universities that he reaffirmed the great value of academic freedom. And he added, “In virtue of this freedom, you are called to search for the truth wherever careful analysis of evidence leads you. Yet it is also the case that any appeal to the principle of academic freedom in order to justify positions that contradict the faith and the teaching of the Church would obstruct or even betray the university’s identity and mission; a mission at the heart of the church’s duty of teaching and not somehow autonomous or independent of it.”
- Said that “teachers and administrators, whether in universities or schools, have the duty and privilege to ensure that students receive instruction in Catholic doctrine and practice.”
- Made a special appeal to religious brothers, sisters and priests not to abandon the school apostolate, but rather to renew their commitment to schools, especially those in poorer areas.

I found the next words of the pope so encouraging and rich that I wish to quote the complete paragraph: “To all of you I say: bear witness to hope. Nourish your witness with prayer. Account for the hope that characterizes your lives (1 Peter 3:15) by living the truth which you propose to your students. Help them to know and love the One you have encountered, whose truth and goodness you have experienced with joy. With Saint Augustine, let us say: ‘We who speak and you who listen acknowledge ourselves as fellow disciples of a single teacher’” (Sermons, 23:2).

After hearing the pope, I feel confirmed in our mission and life here at Niagara University, a Catholic university. And I will enthusiastically continue to encourage all my colleagues here as we reflect on the great message that was given to us as educators, those whom he called “bearers of wisdom.” As he said in his opening remarks, “How beautiful are the footsteps of those who bring good news” (Romans 10:15-17).

I welcome your thoughts at jll@niagara.edu.

Joseph L. Levesque, C.M., President
On the cover
Their Future Is Now 10
Meet some of NU’s outstanding seniors, who talk about their time at Niagara and what is waiting for them after graduation.

Home Sweet Home 17
Niagara’s Vincentians will move into a new residence in December.

An Opportunity to Achieve 18
For more than 35 years, the Niagara University Opportunity Program has helped students succeed.
Eaglevision magazine
www.niagara.edu/news

Grant Supports NU Chemistry Program

Niagara University received a grant from the Pittsburgh Conference Memorial National College Grant program to purchase equipment for the department of chemistry, biochemistry and physics. The $9,237 grant will be applied toward the purchase of equipment that will allow students to study double-beam spectrophotometry and to do more experiments in kinetics. NU will match the grant with $8,000 of its own funding.

The Pittsburgh Conference is sponsored by the Society for Analytical Chemists of Pittsburgh and the Spectroscopy Society of Pittsburgh.

For more information on Niagara’s chemistry, biochemistry and physics department and programs, see www.niagara.edu/chemistry/.

“Above, I thought I’d arrived. You know how many lawns you have to mow to make $3,800?"

Self-made multimillionaire Ephren Taylor II on his first job as a software programmer for a New York-based company. An eighth-grade student at the time, Taylor developed an e-commerce site for the company, a task that took him two weeks to complete.

Taylor was on the NU campus Feb. 18 to discuss “Creating Success from the Inside Out.” His presentation at the Castellani Art Museum was sponsored by NU’s Office of Multicultural and International Student Affairs, the Niagara Exchange Club, and NU’s College of Business Administration.

Described as “walking history” by popular radio-show host Tom Joyner, Taylor started his first business venture at the age of 12, when he began making video games. By the time he was 17, he had built a multimillion dollar technology company, GoFerretGo.com. Now 25, he is the youngest African-American CEO of any publicly-traded company, an author and an inspirational speaker. He appears weekly on FOX News and is also featured in print and radio media.

A Student’s Eye View

Edgy. That’s how Fred Heuer, NU’s assistant vice president for marketing, describes Niagara University’s 2007-2008 marketing campaign. Commercials that appear to be produced by Niagara students themselves offer glimpses into various aspects of the university. But what would a commercial look like if it actually were produced by students? Heuer wanted to find out.

“Once we decided on this concept, we thought, wouldn’t it be neat if we actually had NU students produce their own commercials,” Heuer explained.

So, with the help of Dr. Mark Barner, chair of the university’s communication studies department, and Dr. Randy Nichols, assistant professor, Heuer created a competition that asked students to come up with their own 60-second commercials promoting Niagara to prospective students. Sixteen students, working individually and in groups, accepted the challenge.

On March 11, the inaugural “Commercial Challenge Premier” was held. The 11 commercials were screened and all participants were awarded for their work with portable video cameras and Niagara University merchandise. With messages that highlighted the benefits of attending Niagara or spotlighted a specific aspect of the university, the commercials were fun, witty and well-crafted. They gave the students a first-hand look into the marketing process, while giving university officials a look at the university through the eyes of its current students.

To view Niagara’s new commercials, visit: www.niagara.edu. To view the student commercials, visit: www.niagara.edu/admissions/student commercials.htm.

— Lisa McMahon

Twelve of the 16 students who participated in NU’s commercial challenge, with Fred Heuer, assistant vice president for marketing, and Dr. Mark Barner, chair of the communication studies department. (First row, l-r) Jessica Stahr, Emily Shuart, Jake Scott, Sarah Elliott, and Greg Dixon. (Row two, l-r) Jessica Mason, Steve Scarpello, Jon Scordo, Megan Keeter, William Fils, and Natalie Hummel. (Back row) Heuer, Kyle Dunkle, and Barner.
Dr. Todd Schoepflin, chair of Niagara University’s sociology department, was honored on April 7 with the university’s Excellence in Teaching Award. A native of Niagara Falls, Schoepflin has taught at Niagara University since January 1999. He earned a B.A. in psychology from SUNY Fredonia in 1994 and attended graduate school at Stony Brook University, earning an M.A. in sociology in 1997 and a Ph.D. in 2004. He and his wife, Tina, have a 6-month-old son, Troy.

Who or what inspired you to become a teacher?
My college professors at SUNY Fredonia. My professors always were enthusiastic. They were innovative in their teaching methods. They cared about their students. They just seemed to really enjoy their profession.

How would you describe your teaching style?
Everything I do is intended to elicit participation. I try not to lecture. I prefer to moderate discussions. I believe there is great value in having students listen to the viewpoints of their peers.

What teaching tools can’t you do without?
A VHS/DVD player. I frequently show excerpts from documentaries and movies. It’s one of my main tools for generating discussions. YouTube is one of my favorite tools these days. If someone had described YouTube to me 10 years ago, I would not have believed that such a thing would ever exist. It is a valuable tool for finding video clips that pertain to the subject matter in my courses.

How do you define excellence in teaching?
Developing critical thinking skills and instilling a love of learning for the sake of learning.

What would your students be surprised to find out about you?
I tend to be shy when I’m not in the classroom. As a professor I’m very outgoing, but I’m often shy in social situations. I like to hang back and observe people rather than jump in and interact.

What is the most important thing you’d like your students to learn from you?
Be mindful of John Lennon’s insight that “Life is what happens while you are busy making other plans.”

Once in a while, I tell my students to remember the “P”s: be prepared, productive, positive, and persistent.

If you weren’t a teacher, what would you be?
A stay-at-home dad.
Niagara Notables Update

Dr. Henrik Borgstrom, who was featured in the last issue of the Eagle magazine, was invited with other members of his national traveling troupe, Le Théâtre de la Chandelle Verte, to appear at the Northeast Modern Language Association’s April meeting. The troupe, which performs theater in French for students of French at universities across the United States, performed Marivaux’s 18th-century comedy “Le Jeu de l’amour et du hasard (The Game of Love and Chance)” at Shea’s Smith Theatre in downtown Buffalo.

Oh, Baby!

NU’s Infant Learning Lab Studies How Babies Learn and Move

Dr. Donna Thompson, professor of psychology, is head of the Infant Learning Lab in DePaul Hall. She is researching how changes in infants come about.

Eagle Magazine: Why did you want to get into studying infant development?

Donna Thompson: I got to college and really liked my psychology and human development classes. When I then went off to graduate school at the University of Missouri, I stumbled into working with a researcher who studied infant motor development. I’ve taken most of the things I studied at Missouri to NU.

EM: What sorts of projects are going on in the lab right now?

DT: The primary ones are the perception studies, where we study how babies learn to look and pay attention to things. But we have also done studies on motor development. Both situations are examples of learning opportunities that babies are getting.

EM: What is the process that the babies go through in the lab?

DT: In the perception study, a baby is placed in a car seat in front of two monitors where stimuli are appearing. We vary the kinds of stimuli; it could be a mother’s voice or even music. There is another study which focuses on motor learning and perception where the baby would actually play with toys wearing velcroed mittens. This allows them to manipulate toys long before they could do this on their own. Each study takes about 10 minutes.

EM: You have also done mobile studies as well?

DT: Yes. We tie a ribbon from their ankle to the mobile to see if they will kick it to make it move.

EM: Does each day bring a different challenge?

DT: The fun part is bringing the babies in; the rewarding part is working with our students; the tedious part is going back through the research and looking at the data. For me, that is also part of the challenge, too; snooping through the data to find the hidden messages that might be in there.

To learn more about the Infant Learning Lab, log on to: http://purple.niagara.edu/dstthompson/Home.html.

Hot Reads

As Suggested by the Niagara University Staff and Faculty Book Club

Here’s a list of books to consider bringing with you as you head toward backyards and beaches, campgrounds and cottages during the upcoming summer season.

• “The House of Mondavi” by Julia Flynn Siler. “It is the story of how a family built and reigned over America’s preeminent wine empire until their towering achievement crumbled under the weight of sibling rivalry, bitterness and greed. A captivating book spanning four generations, it’s sure to be enjoyed by wine lovers, sociologists and business people alike.”

• “Life of Pi” by Yann Martel. “A ripping good action story with rather improbable plot twists which quickly became quite plausible — you just never know what’s going to happen next.”

• “The Dollmaker” by Harriet Arnow. “It’s the story of a Kentucky mother of five who follows her husband to Detroit’s auto industry during World War II. Struggling with overcrowded urban life, she longs for her rural roots. Although I cry easily at sentimental movies, plays and even commercials, not many books elicit my tears. This book is the exception.”

• “A Walk in the Wood” by Bill Bryson “describes two 40-something men attempting to hike the Appalachian Trail. One winter evening while reading in bed, I laughed so loudly that my teenage children ran in to see what was so funny.”

• “Germinal” by Emile Zola. “I remember reading (this book) some years ago while traveling. The story of 19th-century French coal miners’ abject poverty was so riveting that my hours of waiting in airports and sitting on airplanes flew by.”

• “The God of Small Things” by Arundhati Roy “is a beautifully written novel … about children, the kinship of twins, family, love, politics, India …”

Other suggestions include “Afterimage: A Novel” by Helen Humphreys; “Atonement” by Ian McEwan; “Death of Vishnu” by Manil Suri; “Gilead” by Marilynne Robinson; and “The History of Love” by Nicole Krauss.
Niagara University’s new baccalaureate completion program in nursing has been accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, the accrediting arm of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing.

The accreditation, which was granted for the maximum five-year period for a new program, followed a self-study by the university’s nursing department and a site visit by a three-member team representing the commission.

Established in the fall 2006 with the approval of the New York State Education Department, Niagara’s program offers nurses holding an associate degree in nursing the opportunity to complete their Bachelor of Science degree in nursing. The first four graduates of the program received their degrees at commencement exercises May 18.

“This is an important achievement in the development of our program. It demonstrates Niagara’s commitment to excellence in nursing education and is a great benefit to our graduates in going on to pursue graduate studies,” says Dr. Frances Crosby, chair of NU’s department of nursing. She notes that nurses seeking a master’s degree have more opportunities if they have a bachelor’s degree from an accredited program.

ROTC AWARD — Niagara University’s department of military science received the MacArthur Award from Cadet Command for having the number one ranked small detachment Army ROTC in the Eastern region. Here, the Rev. Joseph L. Levesque, C.M., Niagara University president, assists Lt. Col. Patrick Soos, chair of the department of military science, attach the award to the department’s flag.

NU’s Nursing Program Receives National Accreditation

The late Jackie Robinson, a trailblazing baseball player and community advocate, once said, “Life is not important, except for the impact it has on other lives.” More than 50 students in a marketing research class taught by Dr. Peggy Choong, associate professor of commerce, embraced those words. Through the Junior Achievement program, they went into 27 local classrooms to help students learn about financial literacy, entrepreneurship and workforce-readiness.

This hands-on opportunity enabled the students to enhance their communication skills and learn more about group management, basic business principles and public speaking, says Choong, noting that one of the best ways for students to fully understand what they’ve learned is to teach. “If you can (teach) it in a simple way and get people to understand,” she says, “then you have really absorbed the material.”

Before going into the schools, which ranged from elementary through high school, the students were given training by Shannon Bloomquist, ’07. Bloomquist has an extensive background with the JA organization, which places volunteers in classrooms across Western New York to help students learn about the global economy, the value of free enterprise, and the importance of staying in school. She participated in JA programs while attending Cardinal O’Hara High School in Tonawanda, N.Y., and continued her work with JA through the Learn and Serve program at Niagara. Now a JA program assistant, Bloomquist says “I’m on a mission to expand Junior Achievement into the Niagara Falls area. NU students are definitely helping us do that.”

Choong, too, has been involved with Junior Achievement in the past. She saw the opportunity to have her students work with the nonprofit organization as a chance to get them into the classroom to teach young people the importance of goal setting and motivation.

The students, who worked in teams of two, helped the children become young entrepreneurs by making up businesses. “The children were even asked to decide who they would hire and how they would promote the product,” Choong says.

Although the children may not pursue careers in business, their JA experience gave them encouragement and a group of role models to look up to.

“Children need people to tell them that they can fulfill a dream,” says Erin Lewis, who worked in a first-grade classroom at Charles Upson School in Lockport, N.Y. “Some kids have never been told that before.”

The dreams of Western New York’s youth are now closer in reach, thanks to Niagara students and Junior Achievement.

— Jason Mollica
The Mission of Knowledge

This morning, I was at the gym where I work out most days. A young woman came up to me and said “Hello.” I responded, of course, friendly nun that I am. She confessed to me that she hadn’t been working out for quite a while. I told her that I had missed seeing her. It was a white lie. I only vaguely remembered her and didn’t even know her name. But she didn’t know my name, either, and when I told her my name was “Sister Nora,” her face fell. She said, “You probably don’t want to hear this, you being a nun and all, but I used to do drugs.” We talked for quite a while about her journey and about how she had finally come to her senses, pulled herself up, and gotten back to some semblance of a healthy lifestyle.

As I left the gym I couldn’t help but compare this bright and personable 20-year-old to the students I see each day here on Monteagle Ridge. Our students are well on their way to bright futures. My gym friend has an uphill climb with little support should she stumble and fall. While I contemplated the differences between her life and the lives of our students, I realized that there was some connection between them, and that connection was knowledge.

Seeking knowledge is an absolute human value, something all humans, no matter their culture or country, yearn for. It is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to us, “the ability to comprehend the truths of the universe.” It is also one of the values that Niagara University has identified as core. We define it as “the lifelong pursuit of truth and excellence,” and we chose it because the mission of any Catholic university is the pursuit of truth and knowledge, informed by faith and reason. As a Vincentian Catholic university, we believe that the acquisition of knowledge is essential for following in the footsteps of St. Vincent: serving those who are poor by feeding them and clothing them, but also by using what we know and can learn to change the systems and structures that have contributed to their state of poverty and their feelings of isolation in the first place. Therefore, it is not enough that our students know “stuff”; they must also integrate the stuff they are learning in real hands-on ways that directly affect those who are not given the opportunity that they have been given for higher education, like my gym friend.

Permit me, if you will, to put a face on the kind of knowledge Niagara inspires in its students. His name is Michael and he’s a junior. He’s a resident assistant and has been for two years. He has a crisp sense of humor and a dangerous sense of compassion. It’s dangerous because it’s so contagious. Meeting him could change the direction of your day and ruin your plans, because you will get caught up in what he’s about: the Vincentian mission. As he embraces the value of knowledge, pursuing a degree in history, he realizes that his education leads him to serve others and to make the difference in the world that his generation is called to make. Not only has he demonstrated an ability to learn (GPA to date of 3.92), but his appetite for knowledge seems insatiable. For example, his participation on many BASIC service trips has inspired him to learn Spanish so that he might spend a year or so in Panama after graduation serving with the Vincentians there.

Father Levesque’s vision of the value of knowledge challenges us to be “a university that is academically challenging and rewarding for our undergraduate and graduate populations.” Through his studies at Niagara, Michael has been challenged to learn and rewarded with knowledge. And, following the Vincentian example, Michael will use this knowledge to make it possible for those who do not have what he has, like my gym friend, to someday and somehow be as successful as he will no doubt be.

Knowledge. Central to Niagara, a university. Central to our mission.
Dr. Dexter Davis
Assistant Professor of Sports Management

When Dr. Dexter Davis discusses the differences between the sports programs of the United States and those of non-U.S. countries in his Organizational Behavior class, he’s speaking from experience. That’s because he has traveled abroad several times during the past few years to teach foreign sport administrators how to run their programs.

Through his association with the United States Sports Academy (he earned his doctorate there and currently serves as an adjunct professor), he has made connections in Thailand, Bahrain and Dubai, and traveled to those countries to offer one-week introductory courses in the basic fundamentals of sports administration.

“We hit everything pretty quick,” Davis says, adding that more focused courses on specific administrative topics are likely to be developed in the future.

Davis’ interest in international sports programs was kindled as an undergraduate at Houghton College during a six-week internship with the National Sports Foundation in the Honduras.

“Since that time, it’s always intrigued me how other countries run their sports programs,” he says. Davis has parlayed that interest into a unique opportunity not only to learn how foreign sports programs are run, but also to play a part.

In the summer of 2004 (just a week or so before he was scheduled to start his new position as assistant professor of sports management at NU), Davis took the 17-hour flight to Thailand to work with that country’s Sports Authority. A snafu with his visa prevented him from leaving on his expected day of departure, and he ended up missing the orientation program NU provides all new faculty before classes start. Davis notes that Dr. Gary Praetzel, the dean of the College of Hospitality and Tourism Administration, was understanding even then, and has been a strong supporter of his international work ever since.

Davis’ next trip was to Bahrain, where he provided his course through the country’s Office of General Welfare for Youth and Girls, an organization that oversees youth sports programs. He was surprised to discover how Bahraini sports programs are affected by the country’s cultural conventions. For example, only members of the ruling family’s sect can hope to advance in their positions. However, he notes that “they’ve gotten better at understanding it’s about ability and turning to people who can help them grow their programs.”

In addition, while women could attend his class, they were not permitted to ask questions directly of Davis. Instead, they had to have older men in the class ask their questions for them, and Davis would have to reply to the men, who in turn would answer the women. The fact that Davis’ words were translated into Farsi and Arabic so that participants could understand added another unique twist to the typical question and answer session.

His most recent trip to Dubai this past January was eye-opening in several ways as well, including learning about the measures that country is taking to become a sports tourism destination. Davis says that Dubai is building “incredible” golf courses (Tiger Woods has played on them in the past) and soccer stadiums “on par with anything in Europe.” Dubai also built an indoor ski slope, an interesting choice for a country with temperatures that range from 75-113 degrees Fahrenheit.

Unfortunately, Davis did not get many opportunities to sightsee in Dubai. His anticipated class of 45 grew to nearly 100, forcing him to offer the course in two separate sessions each day. And President George Bush’s visit to that country just days after Davis arrived prompted a national holiday which “closed the entire place down,” keeping Davis in his hotel and the students at home.

Cultural norms and impromptu national holidays aside, the most significant difference between sports programs in other countries and those in the United States is the way they are run, Davis notes. Unlike U.S. programs, sports programs in these countries are run by governmental agencies, and the people working in the industry are volunteers who have “real” jobs that are unrelated to their sports work. Because schools do not offer athletic programs, it is through these programs that the countries’ athletes are trained. Communities support their local programs the same way Americans support their favorite college or high school teams.

“They take a lot of pride in their clubs and in their clubs doing well,” Davis says. That’s why courses like the one Davis offers are so appealing to these nations, and why their governments encourage and enable individuals to take time off work to attend, he says.

While Davis’ next destination is not yet determined (he’s currently looking into opportunities that may become available in Chile and Cuba), what is certain is that he will continue to offer his considerable expertise to students both at home and abroad.

— Lisa McMahon

Dr. Dexter Davis wears a traditional Saudi head covering he received as a gift from his class in Dubai. The red ghutra is folded on a diagonal to form a triangle and placed with the fold in front, while the black aghal holds the ghutra in place.
Men's Hockey Sets Dwyer Attendance Record

The Niagara men’s hockey team set two attendance records during the 2007-08 regular season. On Oct. 18, the team set a record of 1,848 in their home opener win over Bowling Green University. That record was broken less than five months later when a crowd of 2,100 saw the Purple Eagles trounce Robert Morris University on March 1.

Not Just Another Hockey Club

Niagara’s collegiate hockey program (formerly club hockey) has been offering students an exciting and competitive experience on ice since the 1970s. In recent years, it’s become one of the more well-respected programs around collegiate hockey circles.

“The quality of players we are getting now is tremendous,” said Clay Miller, ’04, a former player and current assistant coach to Larry Brzeczkowski, facilities coordinator for Dwyer Arena.

During this past season, the team, which plays in the Eastern Collegiate Hockey League in Division I of the national American Collegiate Hockey Association, set a program record for wins, finishing 24-8 overall. Ranked 17th at the end of the season, it missed going to the national tournament by mere percentage points.

The 33 students who make up the team share a passion for the game that keeps them involved both on and off the ice. Team president Brandon Butyniec, an MBA student in Niagara’s College of Business Administration, helps to run the financial aspects of the team, which is funded through money received from NU’s Student Government Association, fundraising, and player dues. Miller, also an MBA student, volunteers as chief recruiter for the program. “It’s easy to sell something that you believe in,” he says, adding that the team’s Web site helps to promote the program.

That dedication is apparent in the classroom as well. Captain Brandon Wright, a senior from Long Island, N.Y., shares the distinction of having the highest GPA in the ACHA with a 3.99. Senior Jim Kelley and juniors Bobby Dornan and Eric Reeners, all from Rochester, N.Y., were named to the association’s all-academic team as well, and a total of nine players were on the ECHL’s all-academic team.

Passion and success, both athletically and academically, have ensured a bright future for NU collegiate hockey.

For more information on the NU collegiate hockey program, go to: www.nuachahockey.com/index.php.
A Diamond in the Classroom

As a pitcher for Niagara University's baseball team, Mark Wilson is poised and confident on the mound. The same can be said of his demeanor in the classroom. Mark, a dual citizen of the United States and Canada, came to Niagara four years ago with the desire to play baseball and to excel at his studies. He has successfully accomplished both.

A double major in management and economics and finance, Mark was awarded the College of Business Administration’s Everett Ockerman Award in 2007 for academic excellence. In April 2008, he was honored as the college’s “Outstanding Undergraduate Student” at its annual Business Appreciation Banquet. He has also been named twice to the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference’s All-Academic team.

“Mark’s combination of high character attributes, solid moral integrity, altruistic spirit, self-motivation for excellence in all pursuits, and impeccable work ethic have allowed him to grow personally and academically,” says Myriam Witkowski, assistant to the dean of the College of Business Administration.

Work Ethic Instilled Early

Mark’s parents, Tom and Karen, were steadfast believers in getting a good education. “It’s always been that way,” Mark says. “If I brought home anything less than A, I would hear about it.”

Tom was also adamant about getting his son involved in sports because he saw it as an opportunity to build character and understand the benefits of working as a team. “Even when I didn’t want to play,” Mark recalls, “he got me back out there. I really thank him for that.”

At St. Peter’s High School in Peterborough, Ontario, Mark played basketball and volleyball. The school did not have a baseball team, but he played on summer travel teams, competing with Team Ontario, which comprises players throughout the province. The squad traveled to major tournaments, including many that were played in the United States.

That experience, he says, was better than having played traditional high school baseball because the long car rides to games prepared him for the lengthy bus rides the Purple Eagles have taken. “Our home games were in Oakville, Ontario, which was two hours from my home,” he says.

In 2003, Mark made the jump from the provincial team to Canada’s junior national squad, which consists of players 18 years old and under. Mark and his teammates faced some of the world’s best, traveling to the Dominican Republic as well as competing in a series against the U.S. junior national team.

Taking the Hill at NU

Mark came to Niagara after his high school graduation thanks to the recruiting efforts of Niagara’s former baseball coach, Mike McRae. “He really pursued me a lot,” Mark remembers. “He made a hard decision easier.” However, before Mark took the hill at Niagara, a coaching change was made: enter new skipper, Chris Chernisky.

Under coach “Ski’s” watch in 2005, the right-hander appeared in 12 games as a freshman, starting four of them. He picked up his first collegiate win against the University at Buffalo on April 12 of that year. Over the next two years, Mark made 15 and 14 starts, respectively, and was named the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference’s pitcher of the week on Feb. 27, 2007.

Mark says he has become a more refined pitcher since his freshman campaign. “I used to be choppy with a lot of things,” he says. “I wasn’t as consistent with my pitches.” Now a senior, Mark throws three pitches (fastball, curve, and change-up) with better control.

A good amount of credit, he says, goes to coach Ski, who has pushed Mark to do his best, not just on the diamond, but in the classroom as well. “He’s a great guy,” Mark says. “You can come to him with anything, even if it isn’t baseball related.”

Chernisky calls Mark a “first-class person” on and off the field. “I cannot tell you how many times his professors have pulled me aside during his career and stated what a pleasure he is to have in class,” he says.

After Niagara

With his Niagara career wrapping up, Mark is looking toward the future and a master’s degree in business administration. If a career in baseball presents itself, he will gladly take the opportunity. If not, his academic achievements from NU are sure to serve him well.

— Jason Mollica

It’s a Small World

While Earth is the largest terrestrial planet in the solar system, the following story proves that the world is really much smaller than it appears to be.

In 1978, when a young Joseph Mihalich was the co-captain of the LaSalle University basketball team, he and his future wife, Mary, would often spend time with their good friends Bill Flooks and Debbie Bodnar. This friendship continued after the two couples graduated, although their lives took them in different directions.

It was this friendship that encouraged the Flooks’ oldest daughter, Liz, to contact Mihalich, the head coach of the Niagara University men’s basketball team, when she was looking for a college that would give her a chance to play Division I basketball.

“I remembered Coach Mihalich was in the MAAC, so I sent an e-mail to Niagara,” Liz says. “I don’t think I would have given Niagara a thought if my parents didn’t meet him. I considered going to LaSalle, but wanted to do something different. Everything happens for a reason.”

Although the world can seem overwhelmingly big at times, for the Mihalichs and the Flooks, it’s just the right size.
Some outstanding Niagara University seniors discuss their time at Niagara and what is waiting for them after graduation.

By Lisa McMahon

Christopher Greene’s path to Niagara University was not direct. Although his father, Dr. Robert Greene, ’75, ’77, is chair of the biology department at the university, and Chris knew he’d likely pursue a degree in biology eventually, he opted to enlist with the U.S. Marine Corps after his graduation from Kenmore West High School rather than enroll at NU.

“I wanted to serve in some aspect for as long as I can remember,” Chris says, adding that his father’s 27 years in the Army Reserves was a “huge influence” on his decision to enlist. His desire to do something exciting, and his realization that he wasn’t quite ready for college, also played a part in his choice.

Chris served just over four years in the Marine Corps. He was deployed to locations around the world, including the Philippines, Korea, and mainland Japan, as a member of the Corps’ infantry division, experiencing “every emotion one can possibly experience,” and developing a sense of discipline that he still draws upon in his studies at NU. He says the service gave him a focus and knowledge that most college students don’t have, and his association with Marine Corps officers showed him the value of higher education.

In spring 2004, Chris enrolled at Niagara University as an undeclared major. It had been five years since he was in an academic setting, he notes, so he wanted to be sure he was ready to get back into the swing of things before he committed to a specific degree program. “I wanted to start off kind of slow because I didn't know what to expect,” he says.

However, earning a 4.0 his first semester gave him the reassurance that he was, indeed, ready for higher education, and he soon declared a major in biology with a minor in chemistry.

From his first year in the program, Chris immersed himself in the research opportunities available, first in a clinical placement with the Heart Center of Niagara, where he entered data and did some statistical analyses, and then in the lab, working with Dr. Deborah Leonard, senior scientist at NU. His lab work, isolating DNA from patients’ blood to determine if their genotype affects the
development and prognosis of heart disease, was a continuation of his clinical work. Chris spent about a year and a half collecting this information from more than 250 Heart Center patients as part of an interdisciplinary research project that involves Niagara's departments of biology, chemistry and psychology. The research, performed through the university's Academic Center for Integrated Sciences, has already indicated that there's a connection between the way these genes are expressed and individuals' risk of getting the disease. This information may lead to the development of a simple blood test to detect the likelihood of getting coronary artery disease so that preventative steps can be taken.

Chris presented this research at the inaugural Independent Sector Undergraduate Research Exposition sponsored by the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities. His research has also been included in abstracts printed by the Society for Nuclear Medicine, the American College of Cardiology and the Rochester Academy of Sciences.

In his senior year, Chris began an honors thesis project using a cultured cell system as a model for processes that occur in atherosclerotic plaques.

“Chris has taken full advantage of the breadth of laboratory experiences available in the biology department, using much of the new state-of-the-art equipment in our Academic Center for Integrated Sciences in his research,” says Leonard, adding that Chris has the skills that “are essential to the success of a collaborative project like the one we have with the Heart Center of Niagara.”

These many and varied experiences have served Chris well, and paved the way for his acceptance into Ph.D. programs at the University at Buffalo, Roswell Park Cancer Institute, the University at Albany, and Albany Medical College. He's decided to go to UB and will continue to explore his options as he pursues his degree.

“I like learning, and I like the sciences,” he says. “I think that I’ve only scratched the surface of what’s out there. There’s still so much I want to know.”
Finding His Passion

In June, Evan Hanrahan will move to New York City and begin a six-month rooms division management development program with the world-renowned Waldorf-Astoria hotel. This seemed an unlikely destiny five years ago, when he was a graduate of the public high school in Ithaca, N.Y., entering the local community college as an undeclared major. He took a class in law (thinking he might follow in his father’s footsteps), but quickly decided that he was not cut out to be a lawyer.

A work-study opportunity at Franklin College in Lugano, Switzerland, during the spring semester gave him an opportunity to travel, meet a culturally diverse group of people, and learn where he “fit in.” It also gave him a new focus — he realized he wanted to work in an international career, although he wasn’t sure what that career would be.

His girlfriend, a student in the Penn State hotel school, had talked to him about her courses, piquing his interest in hospitality. So he enrolled in Tompkins Cortland Community College’s Introduction to the Hospitality Industry course the fall following his study abroad.

Niagara alumna Susan Stafford, ’84, was the course professor, and she spoke highly of the hospitality field in general, and Niagara University in particular.

“She just overwhelmed me with her enthusiasm,” Evan says.

That enthusiasm, coupled with a summer job at a Hampton Inn which was managed by Lisa Sparks, ’95, and a presentation about Niagara’s Lake Como work-abroad program given at TC3 by Dr. Gary Praetzel, dean of NU’s College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, convinced Evan to transfer to NU. An articulation agreement between TC3 and NU facilitated the transfer, and in fall 2006, he was enrolled as a junior in the college’s hospitality program.

Evan immediately applied for the Lake Como program. Lugano, where he had spent his first spring college semester, was just “two train stops away” from Lake Como, he says, so he was familiar with the area. He was accepted, and spent the summer of 2007 at the Grand Hotel di Como, first in housekeeping and then in the restaurant.

“Evan was perhaps the best student who ever participated in this program,” notes Praetzel. “Having Evan in Italy was like having a faculty member there. He looked after the nine other students working around the lake and made sure that everyone was adjusting and included in activities.”

This concern for the other work-abroad students was apparent even before Evan left Niagara for Italy. Knowing how difficult it can be to prepare for such an intense cultural-immersion experience, Evan established the Italian Table, a weekly get-
together for the American and the Italian students who participated in the Como program. In addition to providing an opportunity to share pizza and fellowship, the sessions enabled the students to work on their foreign language skills. Evan notes that the friendships developed through the Italian Table are as important as the ability to converse. “You literally come out with 10 friends,” he says, and these friends reciprocate the hospitality they have been shown when the Americans travel to Italy.

Evan’s compassion and ability have made him a top choice of recruiters, and he was offered jobs by all four of the hospitality companies he interviewed with. He decided to accept the position at the Waldorf because he feels it will give him the most experience. “Anything that can ever happen at a hotel happens at the Waldorf,” he says. The job will also likely give him the background he needs to achieve his career goal — managing a hotel in an international location.

Receiving job offers is the successful culmination of a group effort, Evan notes. “All the work you did, and all the work other people did to help you out — it all comes to fruition,” he says, adding that the encouragement he received from his family, and from Praetzel and Stafford, helped him to achieve his goals.

In addition to supportive family and friends, Evan acknowledges that success takes a willingness to work hard, to try new things, and to “act in the right way.” “But once you find your passion, there’s no such thing as working hard,” he says.

— Dr. Gary Praetzel, dean of the College of Hospitality and Tourism Management

Kelly Knox is a senior sociology/international studies major (with a hospitality minor) from Rochester, N.Y. After graduation, she plans to attend the College of William and Mary to pursue a master’s degree in higher education administration. She credits her participation in Niagara’s extracurricular activities with enhancing her education.

Eagle Magazine: What activities are you involved in at Niagara?
KK: As much as I can be! I’m the co-chair of the Campus Programming Board and have been a member of the Family Weekend Committee since I was a freshman. I work for admissions as a tour guide and for residence life as a residential coordinator. I’m in the President’s Society, the co-chair of the Student Grievances Committee, part of the Resident Assistant Advisory Board, and have been involved in the Resident Student Association of each hall I’ve lived in. Off-campus, I’m a Girl Scout leader and work with Home Delivered Meals.

EM: What was one of your favorite projects?
KK: I was the student coordinator for this year’s International Week. Our events included an Arabic lesson, a St. Patrick’s Day celebration with line dancers and bagpipers, a presentation on the BASIC Panama trip, an “Invisible Children” screening, lots of delicious food from Bienvenidos and the Middle East Issues Club, and lots more! My role was to search out all of our internationally themed resources on campus and develop a week full of activities. It was definitely a challenge, but it was also a complete success!

EM: How do you juggle course work and extracurricular activities?
KK: If you love what you’re doing, it’s not work! But it is hard to keep balanced and prioritize. I would be lost without my planner and a to-do list. My friends and my career goals keep me motivated. And of course, Tim Horton’s iced coffees!

EM: What is being an RC like? What’s the biggest challenge?
KK: Being an RC is a 24-hour-a-day job; it’s not something you can step away from. And it puts you in a weird place where you are part administrator, part student. But I love it! I love working with RAs with all different personalities and styles, especially new RAs who are growing so much so quickly.

EM: What would you say to students about participating in campus activities?
KK: All it takes is to show up at one meeting of any organization, even if you’re by yourself. And even if you don’t stick with that particular group, you’ll meet people and eventually figure out where you fit in. And it will be worth it!
The Sweet Smell of Success

When you first meet John Rakowski, you are impressed by his enthusiasm for his studies in accounting, his entrepreneurship in launching his own business, his love for his six-year-old son. What you don’t immediately notice is his disability — John is legally blind. While he initially had trouble accepting his condition, which first became apparent when he was a senior at North Tonawanda High School, he soon realized he had two choices. He could let the disability take over his life, or he could learn to live with it. He chose the latter. “I want to do what I can with the eyesight I have left,” he says.

He spent five years working in the local American Rubber Products factory after high school graduation, using his sense of touch instead of his eyesight to detect pinhole defects in automotive gaskets. While he excelled at that job, he realized that he “wanted something better,” and in 2001, he enrolled in Niagara County Community College’s accounting program.

With assistive technology provided by the New York State Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped, John mastered his studies easily, even serving as a tutor to other students. His work and service were recognized when he was presented with the college’s “Extra Mile Award.”

After completing the two-year program, John transferred into Niagara University’s five-year BBA/MBA program as a junior, where he continued to succeed academically. In March 2007, he used the skills he developed in the classroom to launch his own business, Nana’s Fragrances of Splendor, a company specializing in soy candles and home fragrance items.

“\text{He says he wanted to be an accountant “ever since I was in 10th grade, when I got my first accounting book. I had a passion for it ever since.”} \text{With assistive technology provided by the New York State Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped, John mastered his studies easily, even serving as a tutor to other students. His work and service were recognized when he was presented with the college’s “Extra Mile Award.”} \text{After completing the two-year program, John transferred into Niagara University’s five-year BBA/MBA program as a junior, where he continued to succeed academically. In March 2007, he used the skills he developed in the classroom to launch his own business, Nana’s Fragrances of Splendor, a company specializing in soy candles and home fragrance items.}

“I would have never thought about opening my own business if I didn’t go to NU,” he says.

John, who co-owns the business with his aunt Jacqueline (aka “Nana”), is responsible for the company’s accounting, inventory

Active, Integrative Learning

The internships and research opportunities available at Niagara give students substantial experience outside the classroom that translates into opportunities after graduation:

Gary Damon, ’07, Bachelor of Arts in Education, was a Niagara University Opportunity Program student while at Niagara. (See page 18 for a story on the program.) He completed internships in several inner-city public schools during his four years at Niagara and now teaches in the Buffalo City School district. “I received a job offer senior year and started a full-time position teaching high school English four days after graduation. I was elated.”

Sarah Pikul, ’07, Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Administration, started working as a management trainee at a luxury property owned by the Carlson Companies the summer after she graduated. “In my first year, I did an internship with the Carlson Companies, and at that time, they offered me a job for when I graduated.”

Nate Tompkins, ’07, Bachelor of Science in Biology, credits the research he performed studying mastitis in cows with giving him the experience he needed to be accepted into Cornell University’s veterinary school. “I wouldn’t have been able to do undergraduate research at other, larger schools.”
and marketing. During the first year, sales were conducted at home parties. Encouraged by the success of their efforts, John and his aunt opened a kiosk at the Summit in Wheatfield this past March. John spends much of his free time manning the kiosk, and he has developed procedures that enable him to use the cash register, locate items, and count inventory despite his condition.

John’s success in business is characteristic of his outlook on life. “I remember talking to John one day in my office about his vision,” says Lori Townsend, a professor in NCCC’s business education division and in NU’s MBA program. “What really struck me about the conversation was that John was so grounded and so focused. There were no obstacles to overcome and he would succeed. From that day forward, I have known that John would be successful in whatever he wanted to do — he has the will and the fortitude to get it done.”

John notes that the professors at Niagara have gone “above and beyond” to help him master the course work. He says they have printed their material in larger sizes for him and given him extra time to prepare for classes. “The amount of support I have been given at NU has been inspiring,” he says.

Inspiration is something John offers to others, too. He frequently speaks to parents and students with disabilities to help them learn what options are available to them. He also discussed the software he uses in a strategic MIS class to make students aware of what technology is available.

Professors also find inspiration in John. “A great deal of my teaching at the time that he was my student was visual, and I was really concerned that I would have difficulty getting the information to John,” Townsend says. “He challenged me to teach in ways that I hadn’t before. Not only did he learn the information, but he learned it so well that he was a sought-after tutor for other students.”

While John was confident in the academic and professional aspects of his life, he was apprehensive about how his son, Johnathen, would accept his disability. However, like children often are, Johnathen was accepting and adaptable, even bringing his homework over to his father’s work station when he needed help.

John is appreciative of the opportunities that have enabled him to excel in the visual and fast-paced field of accounting, and plans to continue his education eventually, earning a CPA and possibly a doctorate. He might even become an accounting professor himself. However, for now, John is concentrating on growing his business and being open to “wherever the Lord takes me.”

“John is an excellent example of how people, when motivated, can overcome obstacles in their way.” — Lori Townsend, professor in NU’s MBA program
A Lifelong Calling

Julie Murphy knew she wanted to be a teacher as long as she can remember. As early as nursery school, she would answer the question “What do you want to be when you grow up?” with the confident response, “A teacher!” She also recalls writing on the chalkboard in the basement of her Albion, N.Y., home, pretending to teach her “class” of stuffed animals.

“I always looked up to all my teachers,” she says.

Now she is a teacher others can look up to. Her classroom experiences, which began in her freshman year, have been varied, and she has tried to make a difference in each one. As a tutor at the Center for Joy in Niagara Falls, she developed friendships with the children who participate in the center’s afterschool program. During a placement at an elementary school in Niagara Falls, her simple, yet heartfelt, sympathy for a student who wasn’t feeling well left a lasting impression on the young girl, who wrote Julie a note telling her how much her concern meant to her. At her final assignment as a consultant teacher at Colonial Village Elementary School in the Niagara-Wheatfield School District, she was excited about the opportunity to work with small groups of students because it enabled her to “build closer relationships with them.”

“Julie is the most passionate, engaging and dedicated teacher candidate that I have had the pleasure to know and work with,” notes Cheryl Wilson, assistant to the dean of Niagara University’s College of Education.

This passion is evident when you talk with Julie about her career and her experiences at Niagara. “From the start I loved my education classes and my professors,” she says. “Each one introduced me to something new.”

Julie’s program in special education and childhood (grades 1-6) gives evidence of her passion as well. “I love the age when you can still introduce things to them, and open their eyes to new things.” She chose the dual certification because of her volunteer work with the Orleans ARC and her relationship with an aunt who has special needs. “It was just something I had to do,” she says simply.

As president of Niagara University’s Future Teachers Association, Julie shares her enthusiasm for the profession with other aspiring educators. She worked with a team of students and faculty moderators to coordinate workshops and presentations that enhanced learning opportunities for education students. Wilson notes that Julie’s leadership, organization and interpersonal skills pushed NUFTA to “new levels.”

As her senior year ends, Julie is realizing another dream: to work in a school district that is close to her home. Just weeks before commencement, she was offered a position as a long-term substitute in a first-grade classroom in the Albion district. She’s hoping it will lead to something permanent in the near future.

For now, though, the job is a first step toward Julie’s ultimate goal: to make a difference in her students’ lives.

“I want to be the teacher they can look back on and have fond memories of,” Julie says. “The one whose classes were a good experience and who was kind and loving but still an effective teacher.”

“She embodies all the dispositions of an effective teacher and has a way about her that will make her a true asset to the profession.”

— Cheryl Wilson, assistant to the dean of the College of Education
A new residence is being built for Niagara’s Vincentians

Eight decades ago, the Vincentian priests and brothers working and teaching at Niagara University had the pleasure of walking into a brand new residence. Since that day in 1926, the stately three-story stone structure that would later be named Meade Hall has served the religious community well. From the time of its opening until the 1970s, occupancy ran from full to nearly full in a building that could accommodate almost three dozen men.

“When I came to Niagara in 1972, there were 27 Vincentians on campus,” recalled Brother Martin Schneider, C.M., assistant superior of Niagara’s Vincentian community. Since then, he has seen a steady decline. By 1986, for example, the number had dropped to 18. Today, there are five priests and two brothers in the house, reflecting the drop in vocations experienced by religious communities across the United States.

As a result, another move is planned. Come December 2008, residents of Meade Hall will relocate to a new building better suited to their needs. It will be called the Vincentian Residence, and it is already under construction. It’s also located right next door.

Designed by Cannon Design of Grand Island and being built by the Scrufari Construction Co. of Niagara Falls at a cost of $3.6 million, the contemporary, two-story brick-and-stone structure will accommodate eight permanent residents and two guests. The front of the structure, which will be mostly glass, will face the Niagara River Gorge, while the two-story rear section will run partially behind Meade Hall.

Included on the first floor are a dining room, common room and kitchen; an office, counseling room and storage area; and two bedrooms and two guest rooms. The second floor will have a chapel and sacristy, six bedrooms, and laundry and exercise rooms.

“We Vincentians have been meeting regularly and planning out many of the details of our new home,” said the Rev. Joseph L. Levesque, C.M., president of the university. “Because the new residence is right behind Meade Hall, we get a chance to watch the new building go up day by day. It is fun to watch the development.”

Father Levesque noted that the new residence will free up Meade Hall for other uses. “We are happy that we can turn over a very large and wonderful building for the good use of the university,” he said. “It was a far larger home than we really needed at this time.” He added that the university is studying all options for future use of Meade. Among them is its possible use for office space. Whatever is eventually decided, renovation work is expected to begin in the spring of 2009, with occupancy slated for the fall of that year.

The Vincentian Residence is included among projects outlined in the university’s capital campaign, “The Promise of Niagara... The next 150 years.” Two major commitments totaling more than $2 million have already been received for the residence from Dick, ’49, and Therese Chapdelaine of Manhasset, N.Y., and the Eastern Province of the Vincentian Community. The Chapdelaines are affiliates of the Congregation of the Mission, the formal name of the Vincentian Community.

On March 31, the Rev. Thomas McKenna, C.M., provincial of the Eastern Province, joined his confreres at Niagara for a Mass and blessing of the site for the new residence. The Rev. Joseph G. Hubbert, C.M., a religious studies professor who is superior of the local community, used the occasion to express the gratitude of his fellow priests and brothers.

“Members of the Vincentian community are most appreciative of the effort of the university, through the kindness of donors like the Chapdelaines, to provide the means for an ongoing presence of the community on campus,” he said. He added that the new home also provides members of the community “an opportunity in which to grow in their efforts at contributing to the Catholic and Vincentian mission of the university, especially as this new beginning brings with it our continued dedication to the charism of St. Vincent de Paul.”

By Linus Ormsby
At the convergence of Niagara University’s Vincentian mission and educational vision is the Niagara University Opportunity Program. NUOP, established in 1970, provides academic support, services, and financial assistance to New York state students who are both academically underprepared and economically disadvantaged.

“We seek to provide what is necessary to assist our students in becoming successful,” says Patricia Kinner, director of the Office of Academic Support, under which NUOP is housed. “NUOP provides opportunity; students earn their success.”

To accomplish this goal, NUOP offers a broad range of services, including a prefreshman summer program which integrates college life with instruction in reading, writing, and study skills. The six-week mandatory session gives NUOP participants a chance to experience the various academic, personal, and social demands encountered in college before their first semester begins. The academic schedule is intense, but the program incorporates activities such as picnics, volleyball matches, and visits to community attractions that enable students to relax during their time on campus. Students also attend seminars that help them clarify their goals and career aspirations, as well as improve their self-awareness.

“The summer program was very important because not only did NUOP provide me with an opportunity, it also made sure I was ready to take on the opportunity,” says Kenneth Griffin, a commerce major from Rochester, N.Y. “During the summer I was taught the tools needed to be successful in my college career.”

Other NUOP services include skills courses in reading, writing, and math; individual counseling to help students with academic, financial, career, and personal concerns; tutoring on a one-on-one or small-group basis; and financial assistance.

“The things that I learned in NUOP have helped me every day in my first two semesters,” says Monique Larkins-Funches, a communications studies major from Buffalo, N.Y. She notes that the program facilitated her transition from high school to college. “They help you get on track before you are thrown into a new experience and can’t handle it.”

Constance E. Mathews, associate director of NUOP; academic counselor Lisa Rivera; and academic skills specialist Carolyn Makey work closely with the NUOP students, helping them develop time-management and study skills and listening to their concerns. This assistance made all the difference for Raymond Potter, a sports management major from Jamaica, N.Y. “The most valuable thing to me from NUOP is the extra attention they show if you are encountering problems with anything,” he explains. “The counselors are concerned about you as a person and are interested in your issues.”

Crystal Brea, a political science/international studies double major from Manhattan, N.Y., credits the NUOP counselors with helping her make Dean’s List in her first semester at Niagara. “The accessibility of my two NUOP academic counselors has been one of the most valuable assets,” she says. “They are always ready and willing to help all the NUOP students to succeed in their endeavors. They genuinely care for their students’ well-being and academic success. I don’t think (making Dean’s List) would have been possible without the assistance that NUOP provided.”

The NUOP program benefitted Ezekiel Titus, a mathematics major from Buffalo, both academically and personally. “The Niagara University Opportunity Program has allowed me to become more than what was expected of me,” he says. “This program has given me the tools to succeed and become a better student and individual. In addition, I can...
Crystal Brea made Dean’s List in her first semester at Niagara thanks to the help she received from the Niagara University Opportunity Program.

say that I am more mature and independent about my academics, as well as about what is most important in my life.”

Perhaps one of the lesser-known advantages of the NUOP program is the connections it develops among its participants.

“One of the … things I love about NUOP is the people you meet,” says Larkins-Funches. “It helps because you may not know anyone else on campus your freshman year, but you will always have your NUOP family there.”

Potter agrees. “I have met friends through the NUOP program that I know I will have for life,” he says.

These friendships are not limited to the students in the program, notes Mathews. “Not only have the students benefited from NUOP,” she says, “but the NUOP staff has as well by the relationships that we’ve built.”

Ultimately, the NUOP program is about providing opportunities to students who otherwise would have been unable to attend college. “NUOP is a great program and has serviced hundreds of students over the course of 38 years,” says Mathews. “Many doors have been opened for countless individuals.”

NUOP SUCCESS STORIES

Paul King, ’01, from Bronx, N.Y., was a criminal justice major at Niagara. He attended law school after graduation, passed the New York state bar exam in 2007, and currently is serving as assistant district attorney for Bronx County.

Carol Wilson, ’94, from Niagara Falls, N.Y., was a single parent who worked as a taxi driver when she came to NU. She graduated with a bachelor’s degree in nursing, relocated to Florida, and is a director of a geriatric center there.

Kenneth Osorio, ’98, from Bronx, N.Y., came to Niagara with a low high school average and SAT scores. Once here, he put all his efforts into becoming the best student he could. He made the Dean’s List every semester and graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor’s degree in nursing. He is currently a director of nursing at a health facility in Manhattan, N.Y.

Romona Matthews, ’97, M.S.Ed.’03, came to NU as a nontraditional student and a single mother of two sons. The Niagara Falls, N.Y., native graduated with a bachelor’s degree in sociology and went on to earn a master’s degree in education. She relocated to Charlotte, N.C., where she is a third-grade teacher.
E. John and Jeanne C. Finn have donated $100,000 to a scholarship fund to benefit students enrolled in Niagara University’s nursing completion program. The funds were added to “The Jerome P. and Alice C. Corcoran Scholarship Fund,” which was named for Jeanne Finn’s parents.

“Alice always wished she had the opportunity to become a nurse,” said John Finn. “We thought this scholarship would be a wonderful memorial to her.”

The scholarship, originally established in 1997, is awarded to a Niagara student entering his or her junior year who has demonstrated need for financial assistance. Priority is given to a nursing student.

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From Don’s Desk

Participate! I use the verb because this is a call to action.

You’ve read about the transformation taking place on the Niagara campus through the pages of the Eagle magazine and through our online alumni community, the Eagle’s Nest. We do our best to keep you informed about Niagara, both the successes and the needs, because that’s our responsibility.

It’s also our responsibility to ensure Niagara’s future, and that’s why I am asking you to take action, to play your part and join others in demonstrating your support for your alma mater. In the past several years, the number of alumni who support the university with financial contributions has increased by 8 percent. This is encouraging, and it must continue. And so I ask you to make your gift to the Niagara Fund today. Regardless of the amount, your gift will demonstrate your satisfaction with your student experience and your appreciation of an education that has made a difference in your life. Your participation is vital to Niagara — I hope I can count on you to participate!

By Don Bielecki, Vice President for Institutional Advancement

Major Gifts Officer Joins Staff

Geraldine (Gerri) C. Goerke has joined Niagara University’s Office of Institutional Advancement as regional major gifts officer for the tri-state area. She will be responsible for identification, cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship of an assigned portfolio of major-gift prospects in and around New York City.

Goerke’s most recent position was with Steelcase Inc., where she was senior sales management executive and New York regional manager. She completed her undergraduate degree at Marquette University and received a certificate in grant making and foundations from New York University.

Goerke will be based in Scarsdale, N.Y., where she resides with her husband.

NU Receives $100,000 for Nursing Scholarship

Contributions to the Jerome P. and Alice C. Corcoran Scholarship Fund may be made by sending a check payable to Niagara University. Please note on the check that it is for the Jerome P. and Alice C. Corcoran Scholarship Fund. Contributions can be sent to the Office of University Advancement, P.O. Box 2008, Niagara University, N.Y. 14109.
Tera Sprague, ’01

Tera, ’01, and Jason Sprague grew increasingly uncomfortable with their possessions and their lives, caught up in the dot-com boom of the late 90s. They slowly came to the realization their goals were different, as they didn’t want to just make more money and acquire more stuff. They felt there had to be something more to life.

“Jason kept researching various organizations. One day, he came home and asked me to consider joining the Peace Corps,” explains Tera. “I kept putting it off and putting it off until I finally decided, ’What the heck? He did all this research on it. The least I could do was read up on it, too.’”

That was in late 2002.

By June 8, 2004, the couple had sold everything left after the dot-com bust — their starter home, their cars, most of their possessions — and landed in the tiny, land-locked former Soviet country of Armenia. After 11 weeks of intensive language, cultural, history and professional development classes in their chosen specialties, the Spragues were among the volunteers formally inducted to serve in Armenia.

Tera, who graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor of arts degree in secondary English education, worked within the English training program, helping local secondary educators who teach English to further develop both their language skills and teaching methods. In fact, her career objective at the time was to “fulfill my passion for assisting today’s youth by volunteering as an English and American culture orientation teacher.”

Jason put his bachelor’s degree in computers and business from Marist College, as well as his work experience in starting his own businesses, to use in the community development program, where he focused on educating and encouraging business people to take calculated risks in the country’s still-evolving capitalistic system and to change their thinking from the days of the Soviet era.

The seeds of service and volunteerism were planted in Tera while growing up in Clymer, N.Y. As she describes, it’s predominantly Dutch with a homogeneous culture and a pretty typical rural community. She was involved in Clymer organizations and went on to serve as a New York state officer in the Future Business Leaders of America, where she met Jason.

NU tenderly nurtured her volunteerism seeds, first through her work-study position in the Learn and Serve Niagara program, and then through her own activities. She was active in the Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society and the Future Teachers Association, and she volunteered as a teacher in SAT English preparation at Niagara Catholic High School in Niagara Falls. In addition, she was a member of Delta Epsilon Sigma, the National Scholastic Honor Society for Catholic Colleges and Universities, and the National Education Honor Society.

“NU gave me a way to continue the community service experiences I started in high school,” Tera says. “I spent a lot of time working in the Learn and Serve department because it was work-study, but I also believe in its mission, so it wasn’t really work. It opened up new experiences for me. Through these experiences, I stepped out of the culture I grew up in and learned from people who were different from me, and it was a great lesson for me.”
Theater major Elizabeth Oddy left the comfort of her home in Buffalo, N.Y., to serve as a Peace Corps volunteer in Uganda. She keeps a diary of her experiences on her Web site, http://elizabethoddy.blogspot.com. Below, she is pictured at Kisubi Hospital on Christmas Eve with a Santa Claus puppet who is helping her deliver gifts and treats to children and their families who are in the hospital for Christmas. She notes: “It is not my ‘everyday’ work, but it’s definitely a day I will always remember.”

The following is an excerpt from her blog regarding her first Christmas in Uganda.

Monday, Dec. 24, 2007
Christmas Eve. Here in Uganda I spent the morning and early afternoon at the pool with other volunteers. I’ve never done that on Christmas Eve before! And there was even a small waterslide which made for some fun adventures. Then I returned to site to prepare Charlie for his big day. He donned his red velvet suit, hat, beard, and black boots. He practiced his “Ho ho, ho, Merry Christmas!” (and attempted it in Luganda, but it’s just too darn long) and we were off in our sleigh (an SUV) toward the hospital children’s ward. The elves (my counterpart, supervisor, another man, and I) prepare plates of cookies, sweets, cake, and juice for each patient. The nurses hurry around so excited. It’s time: Charlie walks down the long hallway and pokes his head through the door and exclaims: “Ho, ho, ho, Merry Christmas!” The adults shout and clap, delighted to see Father Christmas. We go to the first child, who is watching with wide eyes. They (the children) weren’t sure of him at first, but eventually the smiles appeared and (they) were eager to see what he’d do next. The children were now smiling, surrounded by treats, a gift, and happy parents. They may not remember the Christmas Charlie-Santa came to visit, but I will. And hopefully it made life a little happier for the worried parents. Happy first Christmas in Uganda!

Elizabeth Oddy, ’03, M.S.Ed.’04

She credits Learn and Serve with preparing her for Peace Corps service and making her transition to a Third World country smoother.

After their initial commitment, the Spragues applied to remain in Armenia for a third year. They had grown to be part of the community and had reached outside their basic job requirements to try to make a difference. Less than a handful of people are accepted for the additional year. The Spragues were two of them.

In autumn 2007, they finished 38 months of service, yet continue their commitment to improving the future for rural Armenian children with disabilities through the Lots of Sun Foundation in Support of Gavar Special School (www.gavarspecialschool.org). The school, established by Peace Corps members, school staff and community volunteers, brings people from around the world together to assist in the development of rural special education in Armenia. Jason serves on the foundation’s board of directors and Tera gets involved in many of its activities. Tera also serves as an adviser to Focus on Children Now, a California-based organization that helps needy Armenian children and families (www.focusonch.org).

“As private citizens, post-Peace Corps we are able to be more effective in drawing attention and building support to ensure the over 700 special needs children in the Gegharkunik marz (province) alone begin to receive the basic education required for a reasonable life,” says Jason.

With continued help and support, they hope the Gavar special education school can become a model for the education and integration of special needs children throughout Armenia.

“We have great hope for Armenia and for continuing to raise awareness about the needs at the Gavar Special School,” says Tera. “In the future, we’ll continue to help Armenia and eventually she will become the country she’s meant to be.”

— Pamela J. Karg

Pamela J. Karg is an award-winning writer and photographer from Wisconsin who has answered a new call to serve as a volunteer at the United Methodist Committee on Relief in Armenia. Her stories about Armenia have appeared in United States and European newspapers and magazines.
Fellow alumni,

Watching the 2008 NCAA basketball tournament and hearing our school songs played rekindled a spirit in me. Watching our basketball and hockey teams compete this year on campus also brought back memories of years past. “Here’s to old Niagara, onward to victory … we’re out to win team. Ever loyal, ever loyal we will be. Get in the game and win, team, though the odds be great or small, for the glory of Niagara we’ll give our all!” How many of you alumni remember that verse?

This Niagara fight song has been played at NU since organized activities began with men’s baseball in 1885. Since then, the university has established other sports teams, including men’s golf and tennis in 1933, women’s lacrosse in 1996, and our newest sport, women’s hockey, in 1998. What a great tradition … be proud that you are a Purple Eagle! Come out this year and cheer on one of our teams!

Our alumni chapters help to keep that spirit and purple pride alive! Join in with fellow alumni at your local chapter event. You can read all about them at the Eagle’s Nest (www.niagaraalumni.com). On June 9, our alumni will join the Niagara University athletics department in hosting the “Alumni and Athletics Kist Golf Classic” at the Niagara Falls Country Club. This event honors Ray Kist, a longtime trainer at NU and an all-around “good guy.” Come on out to golf and congratulate NU’s men’s hockey coach, Dave Burkholder, on winning the 2008 CHA hockey championship here at Niagara University.

Another highlight of our alumni chapter events is our fourth annual “A Day at the Races” at Saratoga, which will be held this summer on July 26. My wife and I attended this event last year and met a great group of alumni. It was a fantastic event! Be sure to log on to the Eagle’s Nest to register online, or mail in your registration. You can call the alumni office at 716-286-8877 for more information.

And remember, our alumni association is for you, our alumni. Send us your news and photos; we would like to publish them in our next Eagle magazine.

Have a great spring and summer!

All the best from the ‘Ridge,
Greg Hudecki, ’68
President, Niagara University Alumni Association

Alumni from Niagara’s Charlotte chapter and their families gathered to watch the men’s basketball team take on the team from Appalachian State in February. (Back row, l-r) Pat Flaherty, ’87, Joe Bowman, ’94, Mike Intemann, ’93, Bill Barry, ’93, Chuck Hanss, ’94, Jason Stein, ’93, Dan Gingrich, ’94, and John Kostolansky, ’87. (Front row, l-r) Kristin Intemann, ’94, and Patti Barry, ’87.

Alumni Association
Board of Directors
Gregory Hudecki, ’68
President
Thomas Summers, ’84
Vice President
Nancy Langer, ’78
Secretary
Father Stephen Denig, C.M., ’71
Alumni Chaplain
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Director of Alumni Relations
Maureen Becker, ’90
Martin Byrne, ’78
Timothy Carroll, ’84
Carol Cassell, ’79
Ashleigh Cirilla, ’02
James Collard, ’74
Frances Crosby, ’67
Jeffrey Dann, ’74
Kimberly Dreier, ’09
Frank Fiannaca, ’85
James Hart, ’69
Anthony Lista, ’80
Loretta Madia, ’86
Barbara Malinowski, ’59
Mary Lou Markowski, ’90
Paul McCarthy, ’60
Dianne Moll, ’89
Michael Moll, ’89
Robert Sheehan, ’85
Lavisse Smith, ’75
Melinda Smith, ’78
Lisa Sparks, ’95
Jason Stein, ’93
Iasha Stone, ’08
Michelle Van de Loo, ’01

Alumni Chapters
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Bob Sheehan, ’85
518-441-2758
rjsheehan2002@yahoo.com

Atlanta Chapter
Melinda Smith, ’78
404-934-6135 or 770-935-4511
nsfundraiser@bellsouth.net

Boston Chapter
Tony Lista, ’80
508-951-2641
tonylista@aol.com
Alumni Association Mission Statement

The Niagara University Alumni Association will work with the Office of Alumni Relations to establish a value-based relationship with alumni that is mutually beneficial, aligned with the mission of Niagara University, and guided by Vincentian principles.

New at the Nest!

The Eagle's Nest, www.niagaraalumni.com, our online alumni community and the best way to stay in touch with fellow Niagarans, just got better! We've made some big changes to the Nest and we're very excited to announce several new social networking features that we think will bring our community together. Here are a few highlights of what's new.

Public and Private Profiles. Why have a boring profile page? Now you can customize your page, control the layout and content to reflect your personality, and bring in content from around the Web like news feeds, YouTube® videos, Flickr® photos and even your Facebook® badge. Build a page for your friends, other members of the community, or for the rest of the world — you control it all.

Blogs and Bookmarking. Been itching to set up your own blog? Now you can! Write posts, automatically notify friends, and subscribe to a blog news feed. We've also added tagging and single-click, popular bookmarking tools to help you build traffic from your Facebook® page or sites like www.del.icio.us.com and www.stumbleupon.com.

Widgets, Gadgets and Feeds. Your profile page can also include content from around the Web. Sport the latest Google™ gadgets, feed content from ESPN® or the most popular YouTube® videos on your profile page. Make it the one place it all comes together for you and your friends.

We know these new features will make our online community more interesting and appealing for you and all of our members. Don't wait … get out there and visit the Eagle's Nest today! New to the Nest? Your first-time login code can be found above your name on the mailing label of this magazine.

Chicago alumni chapter wine tasting at Bin 36 — Mike Hogan, ’76, and Marty Kroll, ’79.

Larry, ’71, and Kris Baron with Monty at the N-Zone men’s hockey CHA tournament event, NU vs. Robert Morris.
classnotes

CA&S = College of Arts & Sciences
CBA = College of Business Administration
CE = College of Education
CN = College of Nursing
CH = College of Hospitality & Tourism Management
ITHRA = Institute of Travel, Hotel & Restaurant Administration (pre-CH)
TTT = Transportation, Travel & Tourism (pre-ITHRA)

1950s John Kolecki, ’50 (CE/Education), North Tonawanda, N.Y., recently published “Spy, Szpieg, Spion,” a love story set in historical backgrounds in Europe and America.

James Shields, ’54 (CA&S), Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla., is president of Mission House, a day facility serving the homeless in Jacksonville Beach, Fla. Last year, more than 500 Mission House volunteers served 1,500 homeless men, women and children.

1960s Francis McCann, ’60 (CE), Durham, N.H., professor emeritus of history at the University of New Hampshire, discussed “The U.S.-Brazil Military Cooperation: From World War II to the Peacekeeping Force in Haiti” in a roundtable at the Brazilian Center for International Relations and at a lecture at the Brazilian Army Staff School in November 2007.

Joseph Wolf, ’62 (CE), Buffalo, N.Y., retired after 46 years at St. Joseph’s Collegiate Institute as both a teacher and coach. He was honored with numerous awards and recognitions throughout his career.

Bernard J. Malone Jr., ’65 (CA&S), Delmar, N.Y., was appointed an appellate court judge in the Third Judicial Department in February.

Nancy (Fichter) Juliano, ’67 (CE), Hamden, Conn., was recipient of the Connecticut Science Teachers Association’s “Excellence in Elementary Science Teaching Award” for 2008 and was named Connecticut Elementary Science Teacher of the Year.

Michael P. Scopelitis, ’68 (CA&S), South Bend, Ind., received the 2007 Civility Award at the Indiana State Bar Association’s annual meeting. The award recognizes Indiana attorneys and judges who demonstrate outstanding civility and professionalism in their dealings with judges, attorneys, parties, witnesses and the public.

Anthony Caruana, ’69 (CA&S/English), Buffalo, N.Y., was elected supervisor of the Town of Tonawanda in January. He retired from the U.S. Army in 2007 after 33 years of service.

James M. Connolly, ’69 (CBA), Chester, N.J., has accepted the position of associate with Buchanan, Ingersoll & Rooney PC, in the corporate finance practice in Philadelphia.

Peter W. Milonni, ’69 (CA&S/Physics), Los Alamos, N.Y., was awarded the 2008 Max Born Award from the Optical Society of America in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the field of physical optics.

1970s JoAnn (Victor) Fassman, ’70 (CN), Wantagh, N.Y., accepted the position of adjunct faculty and clinical instructor for nursing students at Adelphi University in Garden City, N.Y., in January.


William Patti, ’74 (CE/Biology), Bath, N.Y., retired from Prattsburgh Central School in June 2007 after 33 years of teaching junior and senior high school Regents and non-Regents courses.

Cathy (Schriever) Barr, ’76 (CN), Saint Paul, Minn., has been named chief executive officer of Bethesda Hospital in St. Paul. She will be responsible for a wide array of integrated programs for patient care.

Virginia (Thomas) Chiasera, ’76 (CBA), Grand Island, N.Y., has been promoted to senior implementation specialist with Brisbane Consulting Group, LLC. She will be responsible for system design and implementation of nonprofit accounting solutions.

Josephine Anne Loughlin, ’76 (CBA/Accounting), Sault Ste. Marie, N.Y., has accepted the position of records and informational specialist with Upstate Cerebral Palsy in Utica, N.Y.

Thomas P. Mimnaugh, ’76 (CBA/Accounting), Fair Haven, N.J., was recently promoted to senior vice president–investments with Wachovia Securities, Red Bank, N.J. Mimnaugh is a certified financial planner and a member of the Financial Planning Association. He is also a senior PIM portfolio manager at the Messina-Burris-Mimnaugh Wealth Management Group of Wachovia Securities.

Michael Killius, ’77 (TNT), Cary, N.C., was appointed vice president–integrated logistics with West Brothers Transportation Services in Durham, N.C.

Daniel Kossman, ’78 (CBA/Accounting), Boston, was appointed chief financial officer of Initiate Systems, Inc.

1990s Anthony Caruana, ’90 (CE), Delmar, N.Y., was appointed chief financial officer of Initiate Systems, Inc.

Michael James, ’91 (CA&S), Niagara Falls, N.Y., has accepted the position of records and informational specialist with Upstate Cerebral Palsy in Utica, N.Y.

Mary Kaye Gauvreau, ’91 (CA&S/English), Binghamton, N.Y., was named chief of communications with the National Science Foundation.

Robert Patti, ’91 (CE), Bath, N.Y., was recently promoted to vice president–integrated logistics with West Brothers Transportation Services in Durham, N.C.

James Shields, ’92 (CE), Buffalo, N.Y., is a partner in Ingersoll & Rooney PC, in the corporate finance practice in Philadelphia.

Thomas Patti, ’93 (CE), Bath, N.Y., was recently promoted to senior vice president–investment banking with Wachovia Securities, Red Bank, N.J.

Michael J. Schaefer, ’93 (CE), Orchard Park, N.Y., was appointed chief information officer with Constellation Brands, Inc.

Peter W. Milonni, ’94 (CA&S/Physics), Los Alamos, N.Y., was awarded the 2008 Max Born Award from the Optical Society of America in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the field of physical optics.

2000s Virginia (Thomas) Chiasera, ’00 (CBA), Grand Island, N.Y., has been promoted to senior implementation specialist with Brisbane Consulting Group, LLC. She will be responsible for system design and implementation of nonprofit accounting solutions.


William Patti, ’03 (CE/Biology), Bath, N.Y., retired from Prattsburgh Central School in June 2007 after 33 years of teaching junior and senior high school Regents and non-Regents courses.

Cathy (Schriever) Barr, ’04 (CN), Saint Paul, Minn., has been named chief executive officer of Bethesda Hospital in St. Paul. She will be responsible for a wide array of integrated programs for patient care.

Virginia (Thomas) Chiasera, ’04 (CBA), Grand Island, N.Y., has been promoted to senior implementation specialist with Brisbane Consulting Group, LLC. She will be responsible for system design and implementation of nonprofit accounting solutions.

Josephine Anne Loughlin, ’04 (CBA/Accounting), Sault Ste. Marie, N.Y., has accepted the position of records and informational specialist with Upstate Cerebral Palsy in Utica, N.Y.

Thomas P. Mimnaugh, ’04 (CBA/Accounting), Fair Haven, N.J., was recently promoted to senior vice president–investments with Wachovia Securities, Red Bank, N.J. Mimnaugh is a certified financial planner and a member of the Financial Planning Association. He is also a senior PIM portfolio manager at the Messina-Burris-Mimnaugh Wealth Management Group of Wachovia Securities.

Michael Killius, ’05 (TNT), Cary, N.C., was appointed vice president–integrated logistics with West Brothers Transportation Services in Durham, N.C.

Daniel Kossman, ’05 (CBA/Accounting), Boston, was appointed chief financial officer of Initiate Systems, Inc.

NU’s Ruggers Return for Reunion

Alumni from Niagara University’s rugby teams gathered on Monteagle Ridge Friday, May 2, for an alumni weekend filled with fun and events. The weekend kicked off with the annual golf outing at Niagara Falls Country Club. Later in the day, alumni, family, friends, and current team members were invited back to St. Vincent’s Hall for an evening social.

On Saturday, teams of men and women alumni played against current rugby team members in afternoon matches. Awards were presented at a postgame awards dinner held at The Stadium Grill in Niagara Falls. The Lt. Col. Terry Crowe Memorial Scholarship was also awarded during the dinner. You can see photos of the weekend’s events on the Eagle’s Nest (www.niagaraalumni.com).

Please join us for next year’s festivities! For future correspondence and information, please contact nurfc_alumni@hotmail.com or call Dave “Animal” Erias at 716-297-2427.
Travel with Alumni!

Come join Niagara alumni as we travel to the West Coast and visit San Francisco and California wine country!

Our eight-day trip begins on Sept. 12 in San Francisco, and will continue throughout the wine country of Sonoma County and Napa Valley, returning to San Francisco on Sept. 19. Enjoy wine tastings and gourmet food galore while you take in the sights of this beautiful area.

Joining you on this fun adventure is Marty (Morgan) Troia, ’88, ’93. In addition to being an alumna, many of you might know Marty as our retired director of career development. She is looking forward to renewing old friendships and making new ones as she travels with you.

For more information or to sign up to join us, please contact Lori Neureuter at The Travel Team by phone at 716-862-7634 or by e-mail at Ineureuter@thetravelteam.com.

Rev. David M. O’Connell, ’78 (CA&S/Philosophy), Washington, D.C., celebrated the 10th anniversary of his election as president of The Catholic University in March 2008. During his tenure, he has steered the school closer toward a Catholic identity, overseen new construction, and worked to more than quadruple the school’s endowment.

1980s Judith (Jones) O’Haver, ’80 (CN), Phoenix, completed her Ph.D. in Nursing from the University of Arizona in December 2007.

Judy (Cowan) Antonio, ’83 (CA&S/Communications), Niagara Falls, Ontario, has accepted the position of development coordinator at the St. Catharines General Hospital Foundation, the fundraising arm of the hospital, which is located in St. Catharines, Ontario.

Mary (Magee) Rowland, ’84 (CN), New Albany, Ohio, is the school nurse in the New Albany Ohio Elementary School K-1 Building. She uses a specially trained facility dog to reduce students’ anxiety about uncomfortable medical procedures or taking medication.

Scott Bowen, ’85 (CA/Business Administration), was hired by Valiant Insurance Group, Inc., as vice president and controller. Valiant is located in New York City.

Thomas Chudyk, ’85 (TTT), Centennial, Colo., was recently promoted to technology business manager of Arrow Electronics, in the North American military industrial connector business segment.

Lauren Hannon, ’86 (CN), Arlington, Va., accepted the position of product manager for global software at Qiagen, a molecular diagnostic company.

Michael J. Nicholson, ’88 (CA/Business), Rome, N.Y., was appointed executive vice president, chief financial officer of Ann Taylor Stores Corp. in September 2007.

Carol Macri, ’89 (CA/Business), Voorhees, N.J., accepted the position of recruiting manager with Robert Half in the finance and accounting division.

Ingrid (Skogstrand) O’Connell, ’89 (ITHRA/Hospitality Management), Albany, N.Y., was promoted from associate professor to professor in the department of hotel, culinary arts and tourism at Schenectady County Community College.

1990s Wendy (Lugo) Gallegos, ’93 (CE), Naples, Fla., a high-school-level Spanish teacher at Immokalee Middle School, received the Golden Apple Award at the 17th Annual Celebration of the Golden Apple Teacher Awards at the Philharmonic Center for the Arts in Naples in April 2007. In November of 2007 she earned national board certification for professional teaching standards in the area of world languages.

Tanya Lee Mueller, ’93 (CN), Poquoson, Va., was named clinical director of Sentara Obici Surgery Center, which opened in February 2008 in Suffolk, Va.

Kandia Milton, ’94 (CA&S/Communications), Detroit, was appointed chief of staff by Detroit’s mayor, Kwame Kilpatrick, in January.

Laura (Hunter) Koch, ’97 (CN), Pecatonica, Ill., graduated from the University of Illinois at Chicago in December 2007 with a Master of Science in Nursing. A women’s health nurse practitioner, she will begin working at an OB/GYN practice in Rockford, Ill.

2000s Toni Ann Daley, ’00 (CBA/Commerce), Camillus, N.Y., director of development for the Alzheimer’s Association, Central New York chapter, was appointed to the board of directors of the Association of Fundraising Professionals’ Central New York chapter. Her two-year term on the board began in March.

Kiley D. Scott, ’00 (CA&S/Political Science), Lockport, N.Y., has been named partner at Tully Rinckey PLLC. Scott is one of the first partners added to the firm since its founding in 2004.

Audra Majocha, ’01 (CA&S/English), Hoboken, N.J., is an occupational therapist in acute rehabilitation at Hoboken University Medical Center. She graduated from the occupational therapy program at Columbia University’s College of Physicians and Surgeons.

Julie (Pettapiece) Weston, ’01 (CA&S/Psychology), Phoenix, is a child psychologist in a multidisciplinary pediatric practice in Scottsdale, Ariz. She earned a Ph.D. in Child Clinical Psychology from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale in 2006 and is a licensed psychologist.

Matthew Curcione, ’02 (CA&S, Criminal Justice), Suffolk, Va., was accepted into Regent University Law School in Virginia Beach.

Andrew J. Wells, ’02 (CA&S/Political Science), Clay, N.Y., has accepted the position of associate with Phillips Lytle LLP. Wells concentrates his practice in the area of commercial litigation, handling a variety of contract and business-related disputes.

Lauren Rebholz, ’03 (CH/Hotel Planning, Control), Astoria, N.Y., was promoted in November 2007 to marketing manager at the New York Palace Hotel.

Zachary Nykid, ’07 (CBA/Management), Depew, N.Y., has accepted a position as associate buyer in global procurement and materials management with Praxair, Inc., in Tonawanda, N.Y.

Cali Gilbert, ’08 (CH/Sports Management), Niagara Falls, N.Y., accepted the position of director of special events for the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Northtowns in Buffalo, N.Y. She is one of three Niagara University alumni working for the organization.

militarynews

Gail Rapp, ’82 (CN), Oakland, Calif., joined the Army Reserve last year and is a first lieutenant in the Nurse Corps. She also provides medical care in Costa Rica as a volunteer for two weeks each year.

marriages

Teresa Staub, ’80, Melbourne, Fla., to Paul Tsark, Melbourne, Jan. 12, 2008.


new arrivals

To Mr. and Mrs. Daniel DeMare, ’90, Batavia, N.Y., a son, Cobin Daniel, July 13, 2008.

To Mr. and Mrs. Dominic Cristelli, ’92, Smyrna, Ga., a son, Anthony Dominick, March 5, 2008.

To Mr. and Mrs. Rob Gregoire, ’92 (Andrea DeBells, ’96), Rochester, N.Y., a son, Joseph Robert, Jan. 11, 2008.

To Mr. and Mrs. Jack Essig, ’92 (Kathy Smith, ’93), Wilson, Conn., a daughter, Amelia Jane, July 25, 2007.

To Mr. and Mrs. Lowell Sachs (Christine Kenny, ’92), Falls Church, Va., a daughter, Autumn Rachel, Jan. 29, 2008.

To Mr. and Mrs. Jack Essig, ’92 (Kathy Smith, ’93), Wilson, Conn., a daughter, Amelia Jane, July 25, 2007.

To Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Slipko, ’93, Lewistown, N.Y., twins, Mary Madeleine and Jerry David, Jan. 3, 2008.

To Mr. and Mrs. Jason Stein, ’93, Charlotte, N.C., a son, Jacob Henry (“Hank”), Feb. 4, 2008.

To Mr. and Mrs. Emmanuel Voloudakis, ’93, Patras, Greece, a son, Alexander, Jan. 8, 2008.

To Mr. and Mrs. Matthew Snell (Aideen Matthews, ’94), Tewksbury, Mass., a son, Declan Matthew, July 30, 2007.

To Mr. and Mrs. Robert Jones (Kerry Straka, ’95), Belville, N.C., a son, Wyatt Reed, July 4, 2007.

To Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Hayes, ’96 (Laurie Scholze, ’98), Niagara Falls, N.Y., a son, Hunter David, Nov. 6, 2007.

To Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Neumann, ’96, Ransomville, N.Y., a daughter, Alexis Aurora, Sept. 9, 2007.

To Mr. and Mrs. David Vedder (Kara Reidy, ’96), Rochester, N.Y., a daughter, Eva Noelle, Dec. 28, 2007.

To Mr. and Mrs. John Oliver (Gretchen Slosek, ’96), Guilderland, N.Y., a son, Nathaniel John, May 23, 2007.

To Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Nowak (Holly Patterson, ’97), Tonawanda, N.Y., a son, William Joseph, March 7, 2008.

To Michael Thidemann, ’97, Olathe, Kan., twins, Ella and Alex, Aug. 21, 2007.

To Mr. and Mrs. John Jacob (Lara Brown, ’98), North Tonawanda, N.Y., a son, Zachary John, Dec. 14, 2007.


To Mr. and Mrs. Michael Gutchell, ’98, Malta, N.Y., a daughter, Lauren Susan, Feb. 26, 2008.

To Mr. and Mrs. Robert Beutner (Jeanne LaFever, ’98), Pittsford, N.Y., a daughter, Adeline Grace, Feb. 1, 2008.

To Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Oliveri (Melissa Maguda, ’98), Lakeview, N.Y., a daughter, Rachel Brynn, Jan. 15, 2008.


To Mr. and Mrs. Tom DiMillo (Michelle Segarra, ’98), Lockport, N.Y., a daughter, Adrianna Grace, Feb. 2, 2008.

To Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Schramm, ’99 (Stacy Pino, ’01), Commaick, N.Y., a daughter, Camryn, Dec. 4, 2007.

To Mr. and Mrs. Robert Canorro (Rebecca Walsh, ’99), Syracuse, N.Y., a son, Daniel Robert, Dec. 12, 2007.

To Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Bixler (Cassandra Fallacaro, ’00), Watertown, N.Y., a son, Benjamin, Jan. 11, 2008.

To Mr. and Mrs. William Lenz, ’01, Massapequa, N.Y., a son, Evan William, Jan. 15, 2008.

To Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Barone, ’02 (Kathleen Donohue, ’05), Bloomingtown, Minn., a daughter, Lillian Ariane, Feb. 8, 2008.

To Mr. and Mrs. Kurt Daigle, ’02, Clifton Park, N.Y., a daughter, Annabelle Elizabeth, Jan. 22, 2008.

To Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Dvoranchik (Monica DiSanza, ’02), Herridon, Va., a son, Joshua Patrick, March 14, 2008.

To Mr. and Mrs. Jason Sprague (Tera Bensink, ’01), Bristol, England, a daughter, Anoush Lee, Sept. 9, 2007.

To Mr. and Mrs. Eric Daniels, ’01 (Jennie Gentile, ’01), Brooklyn, N.Y., a daughter, Veronica Madeline, March 13, 2008.

To Mr. and Mrs. William Lenz, ’01, Massapequa, N.Y., a son, Evan William, Jan. 15, 2008.

To Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Barone, ’02 (Kathleen Donohue, ’05), Bloomingtown, Minn., a daughter, Lillian Ariane, Feb. 8, 2008.

To Mr. and Mrs. William Lenz, ’01, Massapequa, N.Y., a son, Evan William, Jan. 15, 2008.

To Mr. and Mrs. Kurt Daigle, ’02, Clifton Park, N.Y., a daughter, Annabelle Elizabeth, Jan. 22, 2008.

To Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Dvoranchik (Monica DiSanza, ’02), Herridon, Va., a son, Joshua Patrick, March 14, 2008.

To Mr. and Mrs. Jason Masker (Jacquelyn Vescio, ’04), Tampa, Fla., a daughter, Gianna Jacquelyn, Oct. 26, 2007.


To Megan Trotter, ’06, Newfane, N.Y., a son, Benjamin Kevin, Feb. 14, 2008.

Mr. and Mrs. William Lenz, ’01, welcomed a son, Evan William, on Jan. 15, 2008.

Attention Class of 2007

Have you completed the survey requesting information on your employment and/or educational progress that was sent to you earlier this year by the Office of Career Development? If you have, thank you very much! If not, please take a few minutes to complete the online survey at www.niagara.edu/career/survey07 by entering your NU student number and submitting as directed.

Be assured that your responses to the survey questions will be held in strictest confidence and your name will not be connected with any of the information you provide. Your participation in this project is critical in our efforts to accurately assess the career progress of Niagara University graduates.

Please feel free to contact the OCD at careers@niagara.edu or 716-286-8500 if you have any questions about the survey, need assistance in finding employment, or would like information about the many career services available to alumni.
Thank You!

The alumni relations office would like thank all of our alums who have donated Purple Eagle paraphernalia — the response has been overwhelming! Our new archive collection has received donations of beanies, class rings, ties, old yearbooks, pennants, varsity jackets, and the list goes on!

Although we’re off to a good start, we still need many beanies to make our goal of having a new archive collection has been overwhelming! Our alumni relations office would like thank all of our alums who have donated Purple Eagle paraphernalia — the response has been overwhelming! Our new archive collection has received donations of beanies, class rings, ties, old yearbooks, pennants, varsity jackets, and the list goes on!

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How Would Jesus Vote?

How would Jesus vote? Like any good politician, I won’t answer the question. But I will try to weave scripture and Church teaching into a useful framework.

People of all persuasions cite Jesus’ directive to “give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.” One of my mentors, scripture scholar Father Richard Cassidy, argues that Jesus was not positioning Caesar and God as equals. Jesus was begging the question: Which things belong to Caesar, and which things belong to God?

The things of Caesar were transient: bridges, roads and a military apparatus, not to mention domination, greed and violence. The things of God endure: justice, humility, peace and eternal life. Perhaps Jesus was saying, “Yes, Caesar has a worldly empire, but don’t forget that the most important things belong to God.”

While the Gospels – particularly Luke – show that Jesus was well-informed about the Romans’ political machinations, we know that he eschewed opposition groups and rejected political extremes. For him, God’s sovereignty outweighed allegiances to any party or political power.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has followed Jesus’ example in its 2007 document Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: “As Catholics, we should be guided more by our moral convictions than by our attachment to a political party or interest group. When necessary, our participation should help transform the party to which we belong; we should not let the party transform us . . .”

Of course, ours is a pluralistic nation, and our Constitution wisely prevents the establishment of a state religion. While we have no right to force our rituals on non-Christians, we should bring our Christian ethics to bear on the public debate.

The bishops point out that our “tradition of pluralism is enhanced, not threatened, when religious groups and people of faith bring their convictions and concerns into public life. Indeed, our Church’s teaching is in accord with the foundational values that have shaped our nation’s history: ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.’”

But in a political culture of opposing voices, which one speaks for Christ? The reality is, we face imperfect choices. Political parties are human creations – things of Caesar. They are, by their nature, incomplete.

From the left, we often hear the mantra of “I’m a Christian but I can’t force my beliefs on other people.” But government controls trillions of dollars and touches every part of our lives. How can something so vast, which affects so many parts of our lives, be untouched by faith?

Christian conservatives, meanwhile, have too often smugly branded contrary voices as evil. Their insistence on moral standards is frequently accompanied by an astounding aloofness toward the plight of the poor. Some seem to think they’re incapable of error, failing to recognize that God’s will is, from time to time, stifled by free will. Even the best Christians make mistakes – not because anything is lacking in God’s guidance, but because so much is lacking in our capacity to follow it.

Can’t we agree that no political party or ideology can exclusively claim the Christian mantle? Can’t we view every election as an opportunity to reconnect with the Christ we have chosen to follow?

In Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, the American bishops have instructed us to consider more than 50 vital political issues in four broad categories. It’s worth visiting www.usccb.org to view them all. They range from human life (abortion, euthanasia, genocide, torture, biotechnology, war and peace, and opposition to the death penalty) to family life (marriage and the family unit, just wages, contraceptive mandates, quality education and school choice) to social justice (job creation, racism and discrimination, the right to organize, affordable health care, housing, care for immigrants and refugees, and environmental protection) to global solidarity (poverty, debt relief, disease, human rights, regional conflicts, and the need for a “responsible transition in Iraq”).

The bishops call us to a comprehensive vision of justice. They make it plain that life issues are paramount, with abortion and euthanasia heading the list. They also note that “Catholics are not single-issue voters,” so opposition to abortion or euthanasia is not a substitute for opposition to racism, torture, the death penalty, injustice toward immigrants, poverty, and the lack of affordable health care. A consistent position on life issues is required.

No party achieves that. So how do we decide?

As a political operative, I reflect on what attracts me to Christ. Then I look for candidates who share my Christian vision on a wide variety of issues, recognizing that good people on the other side of the aisle are trying to do the same.

No one knows how Jesus would vote. He is the fullness of truth, and he cannot be limited to any one ideology. Every human creation, including politics, inevitably dulls against his perfect light.

Is Jesus liberal, conservative or moderate? The answer is yes. In Christ, “either/or” fades into “and.” So, instead of using Jesus as a political mascot, let’s use him as an inspiration.

As the bishops tell us, “Catholics may choose different ways to respond to compelling social problems, but we cannot differ on our moral obligation to help build a more just and peaceful world through morally acceptable means, so that the weak and vulnerable are protected and human rights and dignity are defended.”

Throughout this campaign season, the discussion has belonged to the candidates. Come November, the decision will fall to us. May the Spirit guide us.
Do you want to hear from us electronically about topics and events that might interest you?

Please send us your e-mail address and receive more regular communications about all of our events and NUws and help Niagara “Go Green!”

The more we use e-mail to communicate, the less paper we’ll need for mailings and invitations.

Do your part to help the planet!

Send an e-mail to alumni@niagara.edu with your name and class year.

Or, better yet, join the Eagle’s Nest, our online community. Set up your account and provide your e-mail address directly.

It’s easy! Just visit www.niagaraalumni.com, click on First-time Login at the top of the Web page, search for your profile, and use your first-time login code which can be located above your name on any mailing we have sent you, including this magazine.

Thanks for helping Niagara Go Green!