The 400 members of an indigenous people in the Peruvian Amazon pushed back against loggers, poachers, and the government to reclaim their ancestral lands—with a little help from a Mason researcher. The Maijuna live in four villages of thatched-roof homes between the Napo and Putumayo Rivers in northeastern Peru. Earlier this year, the regional government of Loreto, akin to a state government in the United States, approved nearly one million acres as the Maijuna Regional Conservation Area. Without this legal protection, hunters kill tapirs, loggers hack down trees, and fishermen use fish poisons for an easy catch, says Mason ethnobiologist Mike Gilmore who began working with the Maijuna in the late 1990s. “The Maijuna don’t go to the supermarket like you and I do,” says Gilmore, an assistant professor in New Century College who studies the relationship between people and their environment. “Their supermarket is the forest. When these poachers come in and devastate the land, the Maijuna just don’t have enough to eat. They don’t have enough resources to survive.”

This new protected area, replete with biological and cultural riches, is 22 percent larger than Yosemite National Park. The move also quashed plans by Peru’s national government to build the first road through this sensitive ecosystem, Gilmore says. While the Maijuna called the Peruvian Amazon their home long before the Spanish arrived in the 1600s, they couldn’t ask to have their land protected until they had an official map, Gilmore says. Gilmore began helping the Maijuna chart their ancestral lands in 2004 and finished five years later.

“The results are absolutely critical,” Gilmore says of the mapping project. “Without their ancestral territory, they can’t live the way they want to live. It’s important for their cultural survival. They’re worried about their children. They’re worried about their grandchildren and the generations beyond that.”

The Maijuna already have lost some of their identity. Children speak Spanish, not native Maijuna, and many don’t know the traditional stories and songs. The once-famed giant ear discs that Maijuna ancestors used to wear no longer adorn earlobes.

Protecting their ancestral land could help stop the slide. Gilmore traveled to each of the four villages with large sheets of paper, and the Maijuna went to work drawing maps. They started by marking rivers and streams. Then they added favorite hunting grounds and favorite hunting grounds for tapirs and peccaries. Gilmore saw troops of monkeys, herds of 300 peccaries, jaguar prints, and huge flocks of blue and gold macaws. “You see the most incredibly gorgeous intact rain-forest that’s teeming with wildlife,” he says.

More than 1,000 locales are detailed on the now-computerized map. The Maijuna are taking back what is theirs, and Gilmore is helping them in any way possible. Gilmore looks forward to returning to the place he loves best. It’s a two-day trip just to get there, involving planes, boats, and sometimes even an 11-hour hike through the jungle to the most remote and isolated village. “Some of my best friends in the world now are the Maijuna,” he says. “It’s really my second home. I always stay with families. We sit and tell stories and joke. It’s a completely different pace of life. They have much more time for their family and much more time for their friends.”

And when he returns to visit his Maijuna friends, he brings gifts. “I always bring fishing hooks,” Gilmore says with a smile. “U.S. fishing hooks are, apparently, hands down 100 percent better than Peruvian fishing hooks.”
Welcome from the Dean

Dear New Century College alumni, students, and friends:

We’re keeping the connection with you with this inaugural issue of our newsletter. You’ll see through the stories featured that New Century College (NCC) continues to find uncommon ways to connect students’ classrooms to the world. I have much to be proud of in NCC. Our faculty members promote the ideals of innovation, student engagement, and intellectual inquiry across the curriculum. I’m inspired by our students, who are committed to making the most of their learning experiences. Our alumni reinforce the ideals of our college through visits to our classrooms, mentoring our students, continuing commitment to lifelong learning, and supporting the life of our college.

The 2011-12 year will be remembered as a time of growth and expansion in NCC. We achieved our target enrollment of 800 students one year earlier than planned, and we welcomed two new tenure track faculty to our community. NCC now hosts four Living Learning Communities in one of Mason’s newest residence facilities, Piedmont Hall. In addition to our Integrative Studies degree program, we have a new degree jointly offered with the College of Science in environmental and sustainability studies. We have a new concentration in social justice and a new minor in consciousness and transformation. Even our list of competencies has expanded with the introduction of a well-being competency.

In this issue of our newsletter, you’ll find stories replete with examples of excellence in our academic and cocurricular programs. Our faculty continue to impress me with their commitment to offering high-quality learning experiences for our students and ways to involve them in their scholarly activities. For example, through faculty mentoring, our students are learning how to preserve the cultural rituals and heritage of the Peruvian Maijuna and how teachers’ interactions with young children in the classroom promote their well-being and emotional growth. NCC’s three centers continue to serve as places for innovation while offering a wide range of student programs from field studies to alternative break programs.

We continue to excel in helping students discover the value of integrative knowledge and learning. NCC graduates realize that resolving complex societal problems requires flexible thinking, a commitment to ethics, the ability to work across cultural and social differences, and the capacity to adapt knowledge and skills to diverse and new contexts. Our programs equip our students to achieve levels of success and high impact in these areas and beyond.

NCC continues to thrive and facilitate the development of students who graduate with a keen sense of self and purpose, and a commitment to serving as change agents. As you read in the pages ahead, I think you’ll agree with me that NCC is on the move. I invite our alumni to visit us during Mason’s alumni weekend this fall, and I hope you’ll consider participating in NCC’s alumni learning community event on October 6, 2012. Thank you for all you do to support our students and NCC.

Sincerely yours,
Nance Lucas, Associate Dean and Associate Professor

Keeping the Connection is produced by New Century College and will be distributed twice a year. It is edited by Penny Gilchrist, MFA ’08, New Century College’s director of communications and outreach.

Student and Alumni News

Congratulations to our alumni and current students on their awards, achievements, and initiatives. Please send your own news to pgilchri@gmu.com for inclusion in our next issue. We’d love to hear from you!

John Butler Jr., BA ’99, recipient of the 2006 New Century College (NCC) Outstanding Alumni Award, is the new director of marketing and membership at the African Wildlife Foundation. He also sits on the boards of directors of the Northern Virginia AIDS Ministries and the Washington, D.C., Chapter of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association.

Charles Coats, Senior, Sustainability Studies, cofounded the Mason chapter of Invisible Children, an organization fighting the conscription of child-soldiers for Africa’s longest war, which in 2012 was ranked sixth in the nation among colleges and universities for fund-raising efforts. Coats was invited to speak at the White House as a student advocate for the global justice movement.

Heather Collins, BA ’07, who earned the Outstanding Integrative Studies Graduate Award in 2007, recently returned from two years in Australia leading outdoor and experiential education.

Jerry Holy, BA ’10, has been working with the Special Olympics Project UNIFY as a coordinator, supporting Project UNIFY’s mission to motivate young people to become agents of change and build school communities of acceptance and inclusion.

Shannon Jacobson, BA ’09 and MA Sociology ’12, had her book review, “The Differential Representation of Women and Men in Crime, Victimization, and the Criminal Justice System,” published in Sex Roles in February 2012 and her co-authored paper “From the Great Recession to Greater Gender Equality? Family Mobility and the Intersection of Race, Class, and Gender,” is forthcoming in Marriage and Family Review. She recently received an assistantship from Rutgers University to pursue a PhD in criminal justice.
Connecting the Classroom to the World is not only a New Century College (NCC) motto, but also a driving force in Professor Duhita Mahatmya’s work.

Originally from Indonesia, Mahatmya was continuously surrounded by university dynamics while growing up. With a father who was a professor and a mother who worked on university campuses, Mahatmya often came into contact with college students. As she matured, she became interested in college students’ social-emotional development and subsequently pursued a PhD in human development and family studies at Iowa State University. In 2011, Mahatmya joined the NCC faculty as an assistant professor of integrative studies, adolescent development.

Through her travels to Indonesia, growing up in Colorado, and studying in Iowa, Mahatmya became interested in the well-being of children, their families, and the transition into adulthood. This interest led to her current research on low-income families and the effects of stressors on the academic, social, emotional, and physical outcomes of family members.

Her second line of research examines how emerging adults become engaged citizens. “Can you be a socially responsible and mindful person?” she asks. She is curious about why people make certain life choices and has observed that an individual’s geographical location and culture can play a large role in why young people choose to marry, become parents, pursue careers, or actively contribute to society through service or activism.

This individualized, detail-oriented research requires close relationships with undergraduate students and is one of the leading reasons Mahatmya decided to join NCC. Her excitement stems from NCC’s interdisciplinary approach to learning and the diversity of the faculty’s background.

NCC’s small classes and experiential learning are not only innovative to Mahatmya, but they are also similar to her own undergraduate experience.

Mahatmya has presented research conducted at NCC to numerous conferences, including the National Council on Family Relations, the Society for the Study of Emerging Adulthood, and the Society for Research on Child Development. Most recently, she was elected the student/new professional representative for the Family and Health Section of the National Council on Family Relations.

In the fall, Mahatmya will connect the classroom to the world through a research project funded by NCC’s Center for Consciousness and Transformation. Through surveys and interviews, she will evaluate the developmental precursors and influences of college students’ well-being and civic engagement. She will also consider how the college experience affects the well-being of students as emerging adults in society.

Mahatmya’s passion to positively affect the well-being of young people shapes her identity as a teacher, researcher, and engaged citizen. NCC is proud to have her as one of the newest members of our faculty.

A former Cornerstones student at Mason, Chelsey Boulden is a sophomore in the Department of Communication.
New Century College (NCC) attracts many students who are interested in social justice. In response to this interest, NCC has introduced a new concentration in social justice.

When developing this concentration, my fellow NCC faculty collaborators and I built on that interest, creating an experiential learning program based on the idea that social justice should also be understood as a call to action, rather than just a set of textbook philosophies and concepts.

NCC’s social justice concentration is distinctive compared with other university programs in that all students are required to take Poverty, Wealth, and Inequality, a class in which they consider not just the experiences of being poor or wealthy, but also the social mechanisms that create and sustain poverty and wealth. Other classes unique to our program include Environmental Justice, Social Justice Education (which applies social justice theory and practice to education systems), and Animal Rights.

Experiential learning projects allow students to apply what they’ve learned while helping others in the local community. Recent projects included working with homeless individuals at the National Coalition for the Homeless in Washington, D.C.; visiting Poplar Spring Farm Animal Sanctuary after studying how factory farming exploits people, animals, and the environment; and participating in rallies on a wide range of social justice concerns.

What is most exciting about NCC’s social justice concentration, though, is that its instructors have an incredible wealth of social justice experience. Some have worked on behalf of human rights all over the world; others have been involved for years in local racial justice, gay rights, feminist, and economic justice movements; and several have tremendous expertise in campus activism. This interdisciplinary, experience-rich group of professors inspires students to make a lifelong commitment to walk the social justice talk.

Student and Alumni News, continued from page 3

Kelly Sowell, BA ’12, Integrative Studies; Ciara Bush, sophomore, Pre-Nursing (former Cornerstones student); and Chelsey Boul- den, sophomore, Communication (former Cornerstones student), presented at Mason’s College of Humanities and Social Sciences Undergraduate Research Symposium on May 1, 2012.

Nick Willingham, BA ’12, was the Class of 2012 speaker at NCC’s convocation. He is working at the U.S. Office of Internal Affairs for Customs and Border Protection.

Recent New Century College Award Winners

Jessica L. Zucal, BA ’01 and MS ’09, received the NCC Distinguished Alumni Award for 2012.
Zucal is an organizational development consultant with Jacobs Technology Strategic Solutions Group.

Christopher Carr, BA ’12, and Karyn Sykes, BA ’12, received the NCC Academic Excellence Award for 2012.

Bethlehem Addis, BA ’12; Kevin Argueta, BA ’12; and Lauren Perry, BA ’12, received the New Century College Integrative Studies Outstanding Graduate Award for 2012.

Bethlehem Addis, Kevin Argueta, and Saxon Henderson received the NCC Student Envoy Award for 2012.

Penny Gilchrist recently joined NCC as director of communications and outreach. A 2008 graduate of Mason’s MFA Creative Writing program, she was manager of the Fall for the Book Festival from 2003 to 2007. Please contact her at pgilchri@gmu.edu with any alumni-related questions or news updates, student news updates, and social media or website questions.

Passing the Peace Pipe at Environmental Studies on the Piedmont
South American Student Leaders Come to Mason through Partnership with the State Department
By Lisa Gring-Pemble, PhD

George Mason University was awarded a prestigious U.S. State Department-funded Study of the United States Institutes (SUSI) for Student Leaders on U.S. History and Government for summer 2011 and winter 2012. As a result, Mason hosted 20 undergraduates from Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela in July and August 2011, and 21 students from Bolivia, Paraguay, and Peru in January and February 2012. Selected by their respective embassies, the participants represented high-achieving Afro-indigenous student leaders from underserved regions in their countries. Selected by their respective embassies, the participants represented high-achieving Afro-indigenous student leaders from underserved regions in their countries. Selected by their respective embassies, the participants represented high-achieving Afro-indigenous student leaders from underserved regions in their countries.

Housed in New Century College (NCC), Mason’s SUSI offered students an exciting, challenging, and innovative curriculum that combined classroom learning, experiential activities, field trips, and study tours to enhance student understanding of U.S. history, government, and leadership.

In addition to learning about important historical figures, students interacted with contemporary political leaders at both the local and national levels. For example, students engaged in discussion with the Mayor of Fairfax and the Fairfax Chief of Police, and had the unique opportunity to visit with Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, vice president of the Navajo Nation Rex Lee Jim, and Under Secretary María Otero.

Visits to Virginia landmarks Williamsburg and Jamestown introduced students to the birth of democracy; a trip to Philadelphia offered insight into religious freedom and prominent colonial leaders; and a study tour of Gettysburg interrogated the limits of democratic deliberation.

Sessions at the Newseum and with Washington Post reporters illuminated the role of the media in democracy. Other program highlights included a tour of the White House, U.S. Capitol, and National Museum of the American Indian, a homestay with families in Pittsburgh, as well as a trip to New York City to study immigration and economics.

Each institute’s five-week academic residency, titled *E Pluribus Unum: Out of Many, One: U.S. Contemporary Society in Context*, concluded in Washington, D.C., where students presented ideas for

Piedmont/Tidewater Rain Garden
By Kristin Hopper

Two semesters’ worth of work and planning finally came to fruition in April 2012, when ground was broken on the new Piedmont/Tidewater Rain Garden at Mason. Located in the courtyard between the Piedmont and Tidewater residence halls, the rain garden was created as a joint project among the Sustainability Living and Learning Community (LLC), the Office of Sustainability, New Century College, the Office of Facilities Management, and the Office of Housing.

Sustainability LLC residents Lianne Roe, Arin Stackhouse, Aly Rayner, and I created and worked on the project in Professor Andrew Wingfield’s Leadership for Sustainability class. At the beginning of the school year, we were encouraged to come up with a sustainable project proposal to submit to the Patriot Green Fund. Our group decided to create a rain garden in front of Piedmont Hall when we noticed that its courtyard tended to flood during heavy rain. We wondered whether there was a way to reduce flooding in the courtyard and the resulting rainwater runoff. The problem with rainwater runoff is that as it flows to the storm sewers, it collects pollutants from the ground and gains speed. When this water reaches streams and creeks, it can pollute the local watershed and erode stream banks. We designed the rain garden so that rain slows when filtered through it, ultimately preventing runoff.

The rain garden comprises local native plants so that it will not only filter rainwater, but will also be a natural habitat for butterflies, birds, and other local wildlife. Plants include Joe Pye weed, wild mint, wild blueberry, and many others. The goal in choosing plants was to pick ones that would require less care and be more tolerant to varying conditions. The plants needed to be able to thrive in a variety of conditions, including varying degrees of shade, sun, and different types of soil.

We hope that the rain garden will not only reduce flooding and improve

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South American Student Leaders, continued from page 6

future research projects to State Department representatives.

In summer 2012, several SUSI students applied for and received minischolarships from the Mason SUSI grant to support community projects including, among others, a bibliobus, or bookmobile, to promote literacy in Trujillo, Peru; workshops to promote physically accessible spaces at the Universidad del Valle in Cali-Colombia, a program to identify learning disabilities for children in Ecuador; and a virtual platform to educate aspiring journalists in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia. In addition, one of the Ecuador SUSI participants was part of a team that applied for and received $25,000 from the State Department Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund for a project titled Empowering Women Entrepreneurs of Ecuador and Colombia.

NCC hopes that the success of this program will result in future cooperative agreements with the State Department and opportunities for international and cultural exchange.

Lisa Gring-Pemble, PhD, is New Century College assistant dean and associate professor. She was the director of the Winter SUSI program and served as the academic director for the Summer Institute. Rei Berroa, professor of modern and classical languages, was the academic director for Mason’s Winter Institute, and Jessica Oxendine (MA Spanish) was the administrative director of Mason’s Winter Institute. Six Mason students served as mentors, including integrative studies students Karen Ponce-Corral and Kevin Argueta.

Piedmont/Tidewater Rain Garden, continued from page 6

rainwater quality, but will also be used to educate others on sustainable rainwater quality practices. We encourage other students to pursue their ideas for sustainable projects. Lots of great resources are available on campus to help students develop such projects, including the Office of Sustainability, which helped guide us through the process, and the Patriot Green Fund, which provided generous funding.

Anyone can create a rain garden at home and have a positive impact on the local environment and landscape.

Kristin Hopper is a junior at Mason majoring in geography and geoinformation science with a minor in New Century College’s Sustainability Studies.
Living and Leading with Resilience Conference Attracts Current and Future Leaders
By Brandice Rogers and Penny Gilchrist

For the past three years, the New Century College (NCC) Center for Consciousness and Transformation (CCT) and MasonLeads have hosted an annual leadership and positive psychology conference. This year’s conference, Living and Leading with Resilience, took place on April 13, 2012, and attracted a sell-out crowd of 350 faculty members, higher education administrators, students, community and industry leaders, government leaders, armed forces leaders, and professional leadership coaches.

Conference cochairs Nance Lucas, NCC’s associate dean and CCT’s executive director, and Pam Patterson, Mason’s assistant vice president of University Life and dean of students, plan each conference with the goal of helping people achieve a sense of well-being. Like Martin Seligman, last year’s conference keynote speaker, they hope that 51 percent of the world’s population will be flourishing—living a “good life”—by the year 2051. This bold vision is reflected in their plans to start a well-being movement involving Mason, the City of Fairfax, and local military bases.

The conference’s morning keynote was Rick Hanson, neuropsychologist and author of *Buddha’s Brain*. He illuminated the concept of self-directed neuroplasticity, explaining that the brain contains an evolutionary negativity bias. He used the analogy of negative experiences sticking like Velcro firmly into the human mind whereas positive experiences are like Teflon resisting an egg. The key to correcting this negative brain bias is a technique he calls “Taking in the Good.”

Other presenters included organizational psychologist Beth Cabrera, who offered positive leadership strategies for enhancing team success; Todd Kashdan, clinical psychologist, researcher, and Mason professor, whose resilience strategy includes uncovering and following a purpose in life; and presence-based coaching originator Doug Silsbee, who believes well-being is “inextricably linked with our capacity to make a contribution in the world.”

Next year’s conference, scheduled for April 12, 2013, will feature Annie McKee, author of *Primal Leadership* and co-author of *Resonate Leadership*, as keynote speaker.

Teaching and Learning in the City of Brotherly Love
By Megan Parker with Penny Gilchrist

I had the privilege of spending my 2012 spring break in North Philadelphia with the New Century College (NCC) Center for Leadership Studies’ Alternative Break program volunteering with a community organization and tutoring kids after school. We had the opportunity to engage with the community, serve, and above all else, learn.

People often make the mistake of approaching service with an air of ignorance and pride—a dangerous combination. Inaccurate beliefs that you are going to “save” people during a short trip, or that the people you are serving are somehow less than you, have no place in an effective service-learning trip. At pretrip meetings, our team members were reminded that we were not raised in this particular community and we should remain humble and ready to learn from our experiences.

This was especially important to remember when working with kids. When a five-year-old cursed at me during a tutoring session, I was initially shocked. But rather than label her a “bad child,” I realized that the circumstances in which she was being raised were vastly different from my own experience. I was there to support this community, not to judge it.

Inner-city Philadelphia was certainly a new experience for my team and me. By staying humble and ready to learn, we had the opportunity to grow. At the end of our stay, we said goodbye to the incredible people we had met, leaving the community as colearners and better people because of our experiences there.

Megan Parker is a senior at New Century College, studying child and family studies.
Cher Weixia Chen, PhD, assistant professor, New Century College. Recent publications include Compliance and Compromise: The Jurisprudence of Gender Pay Equity and Global v. Local: The Issue of Lethal Injection in China.


Al Fuertes, PhD, New Century College. Recent publications include “Transforming Impact of Storytelling on the IDPs in the Philippines” in Conflict Resolution Quarterly. He was recently elected chair of the Grants Committee for the International Peace Research Association Foundation.

Michael R. Gabel, PhD, associate professor, New Century College, was named a SENCER Leadership Fellow.


Paul Gorski, PhD, associate professor, recently received tenure in NCC. He also was elected to the board of directors of the Institute for Humane Education, and his book, The High Price of Poverty: Class and Schooling in the U.S., is forthcoming in 2013.

Lisa Gring-Pemble, PhD, assistant dean, New Century College, was elected to the Mason Leadership Legacy Program, which is dedicated to furthering the leadership development of full-time faculty and staff. Her article, “It’s We the People…Not We the Illegals,” is forthcoming in Communication Quarterly.

Nance Lucas, PhD, associate dean, New Century College, is the co-author of the best-selling leadership book in higher education, Exploring Leadership: For College Students Who Want to Make a Difference, second edition. The third edition is forthcoming in 2013. Lucas is the cofounder and senior leadership scholar of Mason’s Leadership Legacy Program—a new leadership development program for faculty and staff. She also cochairs Mason-Leads.

If you would like to hear Don, the CCT website has archived video recordings of two events at the Fairfax Campus. One event was the gathering to officially launch CCT. Former Mason President Alan Merten, NCC Associate Dean Nance Lucas, and Don de Laski, Jr., are among those who made remarks. The other event was a gathering to celebrate the publication of Don’s memoirs, Letting Life Happen: A Personal Story of Guidance, Opportunity and Abundance. These video recordings are available at cct.gmu.edu/video/celebrations.html.

Although Don and Nancy are both deeply missed by all their friends and students at NCC, their legacy is very much alive. It thrives through the courses, meditation sessions, yoga classes, conferences, and the residence hall Living Learning Community Mindful Living.

You can stay connected to the de Laski legacy by adding your name to CCT’s listserv to receive announcements of activities, programs, and courses. Just let us know of your interest by sending an e-mail to info@cct.gmu.edu.

Julie Owen, PhD, assistant professor, New Century College, won the 2012 George Mason University Teaching Excellence Award. Recent publications include The Handbook for Student Leadership Development, second edition.

German Perilla, MAIS, New Century College ZAL program assistant, received the 2012 Master of Interdisciplinary Studies Best Project Award for his work to introduce beekeeping to the Majiuna, an indigenous Peruvian rainforest group. He was recently awarded an NCC fellowship to start the Mason Bee Project, located on Mason’s Fairfax Campus.

**In Memory of NCC’s Special Friend Donald de Laski**

*By Mark Thurston, PhD, Senior Fellow, CCT*

New Century College (NCC) and all of the Mason community lost a dear friend and supporter on March 9, 2012, with the passing of Donald de Laski at age 80. In 2008, along with his wife Nancy, he made a multimillion-dollar gift to Mason and NCC for the establishment of the Center for Consciousness and Transformation (CCT). Don and Nancy shared a lifelong interest in spirituality, meditation, creativity, and the transformation of consciousness. It was their dream that Mason students have academic courses and cocurricular ways to explore topics such as mindfulness, well-being, positive psychology, and spirituality. That dream has blossomed over the past four years with CCT.

Nancy passed away in June 2009, but Don was able to see the development of a wide variety of courses and cocurricular offerings through CCT. He even became an unofficial NCC student by auditing several of the new courses about consciousness as they were offered for the first time, including Consciousness, Meaning and Life-Purpose and Meditation and Mysteries of the Mind. It was a welcome sight for him to participate fully in these NCC learning communities, engaged in small group discussions, writing assigned essays, and fully emmeshing himself in this new venture that his and Nancy’s generous gift was making possible for Mason students.

You can stay connected to the de Laski legacy by adding your name to CCT’s listserv to receive announcements of activities, programs, and courses. Just let us know of your interest by sending an e-mail to info@cct.gmu.edu.

Her article, “It’s We the People…Not We the Illegals,” is forthcoming in Communication Quarterly.

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Mason Green Patriots

By Babs Wallace

For my final undergraduate semester at George Mason University, I was given the amazing opportunity with the Office of Sustainability to lead a great new student program, the Mason Green Patriots. This peer-to-peer outreach group was created to support Mason’s Office of Sustainability and a number of other campus environmental organizations. This program offers students in all academic disciplines an opportunity to realize, advance, and apply their education toward sustainability projects that will enhance and green Mason’s campuses.

In the group’s founding semester, 15 energetic and inspiring members, whose majors ranged from communication to government and international politics and NCC concentrations ranging from conservation to elementary education, met to discuss local sustainability issues and volunteered in campus events, including the Rogers and Whitetop Hall Sustainability Opening Ceremony and Concert, Sustainable Food Day, and Patriot Pack Out. In addition, the Mason Green Patriots filmed the first video in the Recycling Awareness series, Gunston Recycles Plastics 1-7, starring the university’s beloved former mascot turned green ambassador and featuring one of the new recycling centers in the Johnson Center.

The group also began filming the Green Patriot Interview series, where members of different groups in the Mason community highlight their work in sustainability. This coming fall, students can look forward to more Mason Green Patriot events, more hilarious and informational videos featuring Gunston and local environmental leaders, and more opportunities to learn about all the great green projects happening on campus.

If you’re a student or alumnus looking for a new way to become involved with sustainability on campus, consider becoming a Mason Green Patriot! To learn more about the program and how you can become involved, please visit us on the Office of Sustainability’s website or on Facebook, or e-mail us at mason-greenpatriots@gmail.com.

Babs Wallace graduated in summer 2012 earning a BA in integrative studies with a concentration in conservation studies. She works for Mason’s Office of Sustainability.

Sylvia Vitazkova, PhD, assistant professor of conservation studies, New Century College, was recently promoted to a tenure track position.

Wendy Wagner, PhD, director, Center for Leadership and Community Engagement, and associate professor, co-edited The Exploring Leadership Facilitator’s Guide and co-authored The Exploring Leadership Student Workbook, both forthcoming in 2013.

Andrew Wingfield, MFA, director, Environmental and Sustainability Studies, and associate professor, New Century College, published a collection of short stories, Right of Way, which won the Washington Publishing House fiction prize. He was elected an editorial board member of Terrain.org: A Journal of the Built and Natural Environments and was recently chosen as a Sustainability Fellow for Mason’s Office of the Provost.

Tom Wood, PhD, associate professor, New Century College, will be serving on a subcommittee for President Obama’s America’s Great Outdoors Initiative.
New Century College’s Rainforest Conservation in Belize Class Trip

By Sylvia Vitazkova, PhD, with Penny Gilchrist

Last May I led a group of students on the Center for Field Studies’ inaugural Rainforest Conservation in Belize field studies trip. The class met several times prior to the field portion of the course to study basic tropical ecology and gain background information on Belizean culture.

Once in Belize, the students explored the countryside, experiencing savannah, littoral forest, and coastal and coral reef habitats firsthand. They had a night tour of the Belize Zoo, where they even had the opportunity to hold a boa constrictor. The class also shopped at a local market, visited a butterfly farm, toured a chocolate factory, and helped out at a Mayan women’s cooperative.

Because rainforest conservation was an important focus of the trip, the class met with representatives from a local conservation nongovernmental organization, who taught the students about the devastation caused by cattle ranching, slash-and-burn farming, illegal logging, and urban sprawl. In addition, a group of scientists helped the class collect data for a citizen science project on orchid bees, and the lead archeologist of a preserved Mayan site led them on a tour. The trip would not have been successful without the efforts of our wonderful hosts.

Michelle Pineiro, a New Century College Integrative Studies senior studying organizational administration, says that she appreciated taking a field studies class with a professor who is passionate about helping students become more socially and environmentally conscious. “I got to know Dr. Vitazkova better than any other professor I’ve ever had,” says Pineiro. “I want to be a college professor one day and look forward to helping my students learn about environmental conservation in a real-world environment.”

Sylvia Vitazkova is an assistant professor of conservation studies in New Century College.
Upcoming events

Meet Author Cherrie Moraga
Please join us on September 27 at 10:30 a.m. in the Johnson Center Cinema for a New Century College and Women and Gender Studies cosponsored Fall for the Book Festival event. Author Cherrie Moraga and artist Celia Herrera Rodriguez will discuss Moraga’s new book, A Xicana Codex of Changing Consciousness, which Rodriguez illustrated. A reception and extended Q and A session will follow at 11:30 a.m. in the JC’s Dewberry Hall.

Save the Date for September 30!
The Center for Consciousness and Transformation is proud to host Congressman Tim Ryan, author of A Mindful Nation: How a Simple Practice Can Help Us Reduce Stress, Improve Performance, and Recapture the American Spirit at Mason’s 2012 Fall for the Book Festival. The event is scheduled for September 30, 4 p.m., in Harris Theater, Fairfax Campus.

Workshop Scheduled
Alumni, please visit our website ncc.gmu.edu to sign up for our inaugural Lifelong Learning Community Workshop on Friday, October 5, 2012, featuring sessions on strengths-based leadership, well-being, globalization, political dialogue, and community engagement.

Leadership Conference in April
The Center for Consciousness and Transformation’s fifth annual leadership conference is scheduled for Friday, April 12, 2013. Visit cct.gmu.edu for more information.

Please follow our Twitter feed (@NCC_Mason).
Join our Facebook group for Cornerstones students (Cornerstones at George Mason University) and our Facebook page (New Century College at George Mason University).
Visit our website at ncc.gmu.edu for news and NCC program information.