From India to the Bronx and Back
A Tale of Two Cultures Told in Needlework
Building The Summit at Queens College
A Home Away from Home for Students

It had been the dream of Queens College presidents for decades: a residence hall to attract bright local students whose hearts are set on living away from home during their college years. Next August the dream comes true when the college opens The Summit, a 506-bed residence hall located in the heart of the campus on the old tennis courts between FitchGerald Gymnasium and the Rosenthal Library (new courts have been built elsewhere to replace the old ones).

What are the advantages to living on campus? “Research indicates that students living on campus have a higher retention rate and are 20 percent more likely to graduate from college than students who live off campus,” notes President James Muyskens. “And students who live on campus have more contact with faculty and other students.”

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The college signed a contract last April with Capstone Development Corporation, a company that specializes in developing and managing student housing. Capstone has worked with more than 55 colleges and universities—including City College—and manages over 15,000 beds in 19 campuses. The project is being financed by $72 million in tax-exempt bonds issued by the NYC Housing Development Corporation; no public funds are supporting the project.

In keeping with the college’s commitment to sustainability, the residence hall design is expected to meet LEED requirements for Silver certification. The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system is overseen by the U.S. Green Building Council, which awards certification to structures that prevent waste and conserve energy.

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Q.C. alumni have already left their mark on The Summit. Its top floor holds a spacious lounge offering a magnificent view of the Manhattan skyline. Intended as a place where students can study and relax, the space will be called the Carole A. and Norman Barham Study Lounge in honor of two alumni (’56 and ’68) whose generous gift to the Queens College Foundation has made possible a scholarship fund to benefit future students.

To learn more about the Summit, visit www.qc.cuny.edu/the.summit.
Momentum was the theme of President James Muyskens’ address to the audience at the annual Faculty and Staff Assembly on October 16 in Lehman Concert Hall.

“After praising the newly minted faculty hires, Muyskens praised our momentum, including hiring almost half of the current faculty in the last six years; reversing the trend of falling endowments; increasing student retention rates; approving a new undergraduate curriculum; and completing a $100 million fundraising campaign.

“And we did so much more, and we somehow did it just before the recent financial downturn,” he said. “Was that just dumb luck? No. But just because times are hard does not mean we must put our dreams on hold. Why should we? After all, surviving was not easy; it was not always kind; it was not always generous; it was not always easy. But it was a hard time, and we made the best of it. And we made it better. And we made it stronger.”

Muyskens continued, “Our accomplishing so much before this crisis makes me think of the Superman comics I used to read when I was growing up in Kansas. Once or twice a year there would be a brand new Superman in the box store, and it would be the right time to have. We have all worked tremendously hard and have earned the right to a little luck. “

In the News

Muyskens Praises College’s Momentum at Assembly

Sound Investment

Steinway & Sons has always played an instrumental role in arts education at QC. "When the college opened in 1937, the administration decided to have a music department," says Aaron Copland School of Music Director Edward Smaldone ’78. "To someone named Steinway and had a few pianos delivered." Now the college has launched a campaign to make the Aaron Copland an all-Steinway school. A distinction shared by fewer than 100 schools in the world—including the Curtis Institute of Music and the Juilliard School—the designation means that at least 90 percent of the pianos on site are Steinways.

QC took its first step to attaining this status last February when Smaldone, chief college piano technician Andrew Satterman, and faculty members Morey Ritt, Donald Pirone, and David Schober traveled in high style to Steinway’s Manhattan showroom. Steinway sent one limousine to QC and sent a second to Connecticut to pick up Morey, “recalls Smaldone. “We spent the morning in the showroom. They took us to lunch and then we went back to the showroom. We chose our pianos from over 40 that had been prepared just for our selection.” With a budget of more than $340,000, they were in the market for 11 pianos; purchasing at least 10 qualifies the buyer for a 25 percent discount off the list price.

Less than a week later, the team’s selections—eight grand, three uprights—were delivered on campus, accompanied by Steinway support personnel. The newcomers joined a collection of 90 pianos, ranging from alumni gifts to a seven-foot grand that had been prepared just for our selection. “With a budget of more than $340,000, they were in the market for 11 pianos; purchasing at least 10 qualifies the buyer for a 25 percent discount off the list price. Less than a week later, the team’s selections—eight grand, three uprights—were delivered on campus, accompanied by Steinway support personnel. The newcomers joined a collection of 90 pianos, ranging from alumni gifts to a seven-foot grand that had been prepared just for our selection.

A Couple of Hits

On August 5, with City Field—future headquarters of the New York Mets—looming behind them, VP for Institutional Advancement Sue Henderson and Louis Armstrong House Museum Director Michael Cogswell took positions on the infield of Shea Stadium to receive Spirit Awards. The Met’s give the awards to institutions that maintain the vitality of spirit that characterizes the borough of Queens. Henderson had another reason to smile: she recently was elected to the board of trustees of the National Advisory Board for Scholarship America, the nation’s largest nonprofit, private-sector scholarship and educational support organization.

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MFA Program Collaborates with Actors Company Theatre

Dramatic developments are under way at Queens College. Building on the success of its master of fine arts program in creative writing and literary translation, QC is joining forces with The Actors Company Theatre (TACT) of New York City to launch an innovative two-year playwriting program. This unique curriculum will allow emergent dramatists to have their scripts developed and performed by members of TACT, an acclaimed off-Broadway troupe and one of the few true repertory companies in the city.

Under the leadership of Obie-award-nominated playwright Richard Schottter (English), winner of the Bierman Prize in Playwriting, this program offers students the rare interplay of practical theatre experiences and intensive workshop training. “There’s nothing more useful and exciting for a young playwright than to see and hear his or her work performed by professional actors in a real world theatrical setting,” notes Schottter. “And that’s what our partnership with TACT will provide.” Students will also have the chance to cross-genre and study with members of QC’s MFA faculty in poetry, fiction, and translation.
The goalkeeping of freshman Crystal Butler helped turn those modest hopes into great expectations. Butler won all seven of her starts in September, in the process posting a minuscule 0.71 goals-against average and a superb .815 save percentage. What makes Butler's story more intriguing is that she was not recruited to play soccer.

“Crystal Butler is a freshman basketball player who joined our team earlier in the season to rescue us from a bit of a crisis,” explains Christian.

“Our starting keeper, Valentina Duque, was unavailable for two weeks, and we were scrambling for cover in goal, exploring any and all options. Thankfully Tom Flashove, our Women's Basketball coach, stepped in to help. He suggested asking Crystal, who’d seen play soccer in HS while recruiting her, though only as a three-game, two-week deal initially. She fit into the team nicely right from the start and her performances in goal earned her seven straight victories, a team record, and two straight ECC Rookie of the Week honors. Needless to say we’re very happy she’d agreed to stay on through the end of the season and possibly beyond.”

Even with the exploits of Butler, September’s success would not have been possible without the offense of sophomore Andrea Slavin, who led the Lady Knights with seven goals in the month. In what is becoming a fine, bounce-back year after missing the last 13 games of the 2007 season, Andrea produced back-to-back two-goal games against Felician College and Caldwell College. She also scored the game-winning goal against Georgian Court on the 20th and the golden goal in a 3-2 overtime victory against Bentley College on the 22nd.

Slavin’s importance to the team cannot be overstated. As Coach Christian said, “Andrea is a key member of our squad and her individual ability and work ethic make us a better team. However it is her goal-scoring ability that is invaluable to our current team. Her teammates deserve a lot of the credit too, but she has a knack for finding the back of the net when we need it.”

She is the kind of player who also attracts a lot of attention from opposing defenders, and as such her productive play was invaluable to our current team and her individual ability and work ethic make us a better team. However it is her goal-scoring ability that is invaluable to our current team.

Women’s Tennis

Coming off an impressive 8-3 fall season and an appearance in the 2008 East Coast Conference Team Championship Finals, the Lady Knights were ranked second in the East Region by the Intercollegiate Tennis Association. The team’s six-year reign as conference champions ended Oct. 23 with a 5-2 loss to Concordia College in the ECC finals. Four players were ranked in the top 13 in the East in singles: Laura Mocodeanne (4th), Maria Mendes (5th), Alyssa Morra (12th), and Andrea Slavin (13th). The pairings of Mendes/Morra and Kirby Reiss/Mocodeanne were fifth and sixth, respectively, in the doubles rankings.

Women’s Track

Led by Indira Avila, the Women’s Track Team finished seventh at the East Coast Conference Cross Country Champi- onships Oct. 25 at Sunken Meadow Park on Long Island. Avila finished 11th to earn second team honors. She bested the field Oct. 12 at the College of Staten Island Invitational, held at Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx, where the Lady Knights finished fifth. She also finished first at the Sept. 20 Quennsborough Community College Invitational, the Knights finished ninth.

Men’s Tennis

The team was ranked second in the East Region by the Intercollegiate Tennis Association in a poll released Oct. 31. The Knights were also ranked 41st in the nation in Division II. Two Knights placed in the top 15 in the region in singles and doubles. Fabio Minuini and David Burstein were fifth and eighth in the singles rankings, respectively, and were fifth in doubles as well.

Men’s Track

The Knights finished seventh at the East Coast Conference Cross Country Championships, held Oct. 25 at Sunken Meadow Park on Long Island. Lev Starikow was the men’s top-finisher. The team previously placed fifth at the College of Staten Island Invitational, held at Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx on Oct. 12. At the Sept. 20 Quennsborough Community College Invitational, the Knights finished ninth.

Men’s Water Polo

Joshua Tatro scored the game winner as the Knights defeated Connecticut College, 16-15 in overtime, to take seventh place at the Northern Division Water Polo Championships, held Nov. 9 on the MIT campus. They finished the season with an overall record of 8-14 and a conference record of 2-5.

Women’s Soccer

Molloy College defeated the Lady Knights, 1-0, on a golden goal in the second overtime of an East Coast Conference game Nov. 1. The team wrapped up their regular season with a 12-6 record overall and a 4-5 record versus ECC foes. Two Lady Knights, Andrea Slavin and Jenna Peveraro, were named all-East Coast Conference for the 2008 season. Slavin, who scored seven goals in a five-game stretch in September, was the Lady Knights leading scorer with 13 goals and 28 points in 16 games. Peveraro had two assists in 18 games and was a force on defense.

Women’s Swimming

The Lady Knights began their 2008-09 schedule with a meet against the University of Bridgeport on Halloween as Connecticut. Bridgeport came away the victor, 123 to 93.5.
Twenty-four years ago, Dr. Munj and Mrs. Geeta Athreya of New Delhi had been impressed by an essay a young art teacher had written describing herself as a Buddhist and vegetarian. It had been submitted as part of a competition sponsored by the Asia Society of New York, in which the winners would live with an Indian family and teach in a New Delhi school. The Athreyas invited the writer—Rikki Asher, now the director of art education at Queens College—to spend two weeks with them. It was the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

So in 2007 when Asher had an opportunity to return to India, “I called on my dear friend in New Delhi to ask if she knew a school that would be interested in art educational research,” she says. “Geeta recommended the Pardada Pardadi Girls Vocational School.” Pardada Pardadi was established in 2000 in Anupshahr, Uttar Pradesh, one of the poorest regions in northern India. Its founder, Virendera (Sam) Singh, a retired director of U.S. Dupont South Asia, created the school to address India’s severe gender bias by giving girls free education and vocational training.

As Asher notes in a recent issue of School Arts, “Girls learn the art of fine hand embroidery, linen applique work, and block printing in the form of tablecloths, bed covers, sheets, curtains, and cushion covers. Their products are sold in New Delhi shops and the proceeds go towards the welfare of women in Anupshahr.”

Asher went to Pardada Pardadi to do research on the impact of art and creative writing through bookmaking. “I do what is called constructivist education,” she explains, “which stresses that the teacher is there as a coach who enables students to actively construct knowledge rather than being passive receivers of information.”

Using this method, Asher described to her fifth- and seventh-grade students what she had seen on her way to school. She then had each student add something to the narrative based on what they had observed walking to school that day. Unaccustomed to a creative process inspired by their own experiences, this exercise, says Asher, proved liberating for the girls, who at first were reluctant to volunteer any information.

Asher next had the girls take their accounts of the things they had seen—brown monkeys, blue peacocks, yellow bananas, green sugar cane on a cart, and more—and translate them into memory drawings done in pencil, pastels, and paints. The drawings were collected into two sets of books. The girls kept one set and Asher exchanged the other with fifth and seventh graders in New York for similar books they had created.

In early 2008, Asher was invited back to Pardada Pardadi. This time she sought to tap into the girls’ remarkable sewing skills to create a Peace Story Quilt. Before leaving, she got together with art teacher Jane Pinchuck and a group of her eighth-grade students at the Bronx Academy for the Future to create their version of a Peace Story Quilt, which depicted Asher’s experiences teaching in India. Asher presented this quilt to the Pardada Pardadi School, where it is now on display.

A group of eighth-grade girls and their teachers at Pardada Pardadi then produced a quilt that Asher carried back to New York for permanent display in the Bronx Academy. First, however, it was exhibited as part of Asher’s show at the college’s Godwin-Ternbach Museum, Power to the Peaceful: A Multicultural Peace Quilt Exhibition (December 15, 2008–January 15, 2009).

Asher hopes her experiences in book- and quilt-making will serve as a model for creative arts lessons in Indian and American schools. She notes that the students learned something about each other’s cultures from the process, and for the Indian students in particular, it may have a profound transformative effect. “Although they live in economically poor communities, with many household responsibilities before and after school, they were open to one another, to the rich world of art and the imagination, and moved to a new level of consciousness—of self-worth and possibility.”

Telling Stories with Quilts
Bringing art and hope to young girls in India

By Bob Suter

Photos by Nancy Bareis
By Leslie Jay

A fake newscaster is only as good as his sources. So in August 2007, when “The Daily Show” anchor Jon Stewart sought insight into the state of memory lapses among prominent Republicans, he interviewed one of the nation’s top brain experts: Mony de Leon ’69. Dapper in a beige jacket and open-collared black shirt, the founder of the Center for Brain Health at New York University’s medical school kept a straight face as he separated the right and left hemispheres of a detailed plastic model brain. “The hard part is putting it back together,” he quipped.

De Leon sees a lot of people with brains that are, in effect, broken. He specializes in Alzheimer’s disease. The term entered the medical lexicon a little over a century ago, after German psychiatrist Alois Alzheimer autopsied a middle-aged woman who had developed adult-onset dementia. In a paper he presented in 1906, Alzheimer attributed her deterioration to anomalies he saw in her brain. The same abnormalities were documented postmortem in countless cases. But doctors who suspected Alzheimer’s in living people had to make educated guesses, based on patients’ symptoms and behavior. By giving doctors their first diagnostic tool, de Leon revolutionized an entire branch of medicine.

He hadn’t planned to enter the field—or QC. “My parents didn’t have the money to send me to Cornell,” comments the Forest Hills native. “I had wanted to be a marine biologist. So I found another subject I was interested in. After getting a bachelor’s degree in psychology, he went back to his alma mater for a master’s. Behavioral experiments with animals held little appeal. But an internship working with elderly residents of Netanya, Israel, piqued de Leon’s curiosity about the aging human brain. “There were these shacks filled with old people who weren’t functional,” he recalls. “Nobody looked after them. I surveyed these communities and proposed consolidated services.” De Leon, who had left the QC grad program, set up a support system to provide clients with vocational services and medical volunteers. Then his budget was eliminated. “I decided to get a doctorate, return to Israel, and secure funding in Jerusalem.”

Instead, his career took another serendipitous turn. As a grad student at Columbia University in 1976, he heard that New York University’s medical school kept a straight face as he separated the right and left hemispheres of a detailed plastic model brain. “The hard part is putting it back together,” he quipped.

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He has stayed there ever since, becoming a professor in the med school’s psychiatry department and establishing the university’s Neuroraming Laboratory. Some might be depressed by de Leon’s specialty. An upbeat sort, he’s more disturbed by the decrease in government subsidies for science. “This war is taking away our money,” he declares. “There is a direct relationship between spending money on a war and money for health care.” Nonetheless, he finds a way to stay in business. Each year, as a collaborative service to the research community, de Leon trains about 10 scientists from around the world in brain-imaging techniques and disease evaluation. In recognition of his contributions, he was voted “world’s pioneer in the brain imaging of Alzheimer’s disease” in 2006, at a conference in Tubingen, Germany, commemorating the centennial of Dr. Alzheimer’s presentation.

The author of more than 200 papers, de Leon continues to use the latest technologies to develop early diagnostic and biological markers for Alzheimer’s. “Our greatest accomplishments are in the area of early diagnostics,” he says. “Now we are trying to launch the first prevention studies. The benefit of a drug has to outweigh its risk for the individual. This makes correct diagnosis extremely important, as some drugs do carry risks. Longitudinal studies [which follow participants over time and attempt to predict the future diagnosis] are the basis of the existing knowledge, and more are being designed.”

One longitudinal Center for Brain Health study, funded by the National Institutes of Health, tracks adults over an 18-month period to determine whether semiannual neuroimaging can predict the onset of Alzheimer’s and monitor its progression. This program is open to members of the general public who would like risk evaluation or want to learn about their brain and its function. “Everyone has a parent who is sick or knows someone who is,” observes de Leon. “If people want this disease cured, it means getting their sneakers on and coming over here.” Would-be study participants can email de Leon (mony.deleon@med.nyu.edu). (For the story of someone who did this, see page 12.)
Mind Games
Our fearless reporter volunteers to be a lab rat

I have supreme confidence in my memory. So do my family and friends. When my husband wants to remember something, he tells me about it instead of jotting it down. Consequently, I’m more than a little mortified to find myself unable to name all 10 items on a grocery list moments after Maria Guzman, a research assistant at New York University’s Center for Brain Health, reads them. She’s doing a neuromaging study funded by the National Institutes of Health. When Guzman repeats the list, I pick up two of the three missing items; I don’t nail all of them until my next attempt. Perhaps lab rats fear failure, too.

The goal of this study is to find out if brain scans can help clinicians anticipate the onset of Alzheimer’s disease and follow its development. An ease-of-recognition test is an early symptom of Alzheimer’s, its participants in this project—open to generally healthy adults age 21 to 90—undergo a battery of memory tests three times, six months apart. They also get a basic physical, a brain MRI, and an LP, which is medical slang for lumbar puncture, a nicer way of saying “spinal tap.” “We use really thin needles,” swears Guzman. “What won’t I do to get out of the office? I decide to take Mony de Leon up on his challenge (see story p. 10) and lend my body to science.

To design measured different domains of cognitive function, many of the tests seem easy. Listen to a brief story and repeat it verbatim; listen to 10 pairs of unrelated words and repeat them; tackle a different task and then try to recite the story all over again. Alas, I get the gist of the story but can’t recite more than a line or two, and my performance deteriorates after the interruption. I retain barely half of the word pairs by finding connections between them: “Zebra” and “zebra’s” in both lists.

After looking at a series of odd positional shapes with numerals on them, I can’t recite the numbers absent from otherwise identical images. Never did like geometry. But at this point, I have to wonder: Am I, at age 51, beginning to lose it? Every so often, I misplace my house keys. Worse yet, when I’m watching “Law & Order” reruns, I can’t recall who my family and friends are. When my husband asks me to do my family and friends, I don’t need a calculator to tell him the answer. Math used to be my greatest strength. And “cockroach” are both living things!

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The roster includes Distinguished Professor Jeffrey Halperin, an AD/HD authority who was featured in ads on New York City buses. His daughter is investigating how medications used to treat Alzheimer’s affect the elderly brain functions, or doesn’t. “What won’t I do to get out of the office? I decide to take Mony de Leon up on his challenge (see story p. 10) and lend my body to science.

There is a tradition of providing undergraduate and graduate students with a fundamental understanding of the science of psychology, says acting department chair Ray Johnson, Jr. “We offer hands-on research training by internationally recognized faculty who teach both the psychology and neuroscience of real-world problems such as Alzheimer’s disease, autism, schizophrenia, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorders, mental retardation, mood disorders, neurocognitive disorders, and drug addiction.”

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Psyched about Teaching and Research
Healthy changes are taking place at QC’s Department of Psychology. Over half of the current faculty have been hired since 1999. The department now offers undergraduate majors in psychology and neuroscience, a post-baccalaureate program in applied behavior analysis, applied psychology, and a clinical and behavioral neuropsychology master’s program. New MA programs in behavioral neuroscience and applied behavior analysis have been proposed. Two CUNY doctoral subprograms—in learning processes and neuro-psychology—are based on the Queens College campus.

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By Leslie Jay
If asked to choose between heart and mind, Nancy Foldi (Psychology) would put all her money on the latter—as a research area. “No offense to cardiologists, but the brain is the most amazing organ in the body,” she says. At QC—a center for neuroscience—plenty of colleagues would agree with her.

“Neuroscientists are debating which deteriorates first: memory, or the attentional mechanism in the brain that helps to select and emphasize what should be remembered. To help resolve this question, another one of Foldi’s studies, based at Winthrop and funded entirely by the Alzheimer’s Association, is investigating how medications used to treat Alzheimer’s affect the elderly brain functions, or doesn’t. “What won’t I do to get out of the office? I decide to take Mony de Leon up on his challenge (see story p. 10) and lend my body to science.

Nancy Foldi (left) encourages QC students—such as Georgina Damiani, OP, a double major in psychology and neuroscience—to participate in research projects.

Age-old Mystery
QC Professor Nancy Foldi studies how the elderly brain functions, or doesn’t

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By Leslie Jay
If asked to choose between heart and mind, Nancy Foldi (Psychology) would put all her money on the latter—as a research area. “No offense to cardiologists, but the brain is the most amazing organ in the body,” she says. At QC—a center for neuroscience—plenty of colleagues would agree with her.

“Neuroscientists are debating which deteriorates first: memory, or the attentional mechanism in the brain that helps to select and emphasize what should be remembered. To help resolve this question, another one of Foldi’s studies, based at Winthrop and funded entirely by the Alzheimer’s Association, is investigating how medications used to treat Alzheimer’s affect the elderly brain functions, or doesn’t. “What won’t I do to get out of the office? I decide to take Mony de Leon up on his challenge (see story p. 10) and lend my body to science.

Neuroscientists are debating which deteriorates first: memory, or the attentional mechanism in the brain that helps to select and emphasize what should be remembered. To help resolve this question, another one of Foldi’s studies, based at Winthrop and funded entirely by the Alzheimer’s Association, is investigating how medications used to treat Alzheimer’s affect the elderly brain functions, or doesn’t. “What won’t I do to get out of the office? I decide to take Mony de Leon up on his challenge (see story p. 10) and lend my body to science.
Former campus activists look back at their roles in the civil rights movement that culminated in the election of Barack Obama

MAKING PROGRESS

By Anne Seltzer

Protesting racially discriminatory employment practices at the 1964 New York World’s Fair got first-time arrestee Dena Weisman Fisher ’65 a three-day stay in the Women’s House of Detention and a free pass on a math test. “I had missed an important exam while I was in prison, and the professor told me that wasn’t a valid excuse, so I would fail the course,” she recalls. But department head Banesh Hoffmann intervened, telling the professor to award Fisher, a top student, an A.

At the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Linzer times to date. Working under Bayard Rustin, he helped organize the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Linzer subsequently became the first draft resister in New York to be declared 1-A. Delinquent. “I rode in a van in El Salvador with the nuns who were later murdered,” Komisar said. Today she tracks offshore bank and corporate secrecy; her freelance articles are copied on her blog. The Komisar Scoop.

The American civil rights struggle erupted on many fronts and involved many members of the QC community, symbolized tragically by undergraduate Andrew Goodman, who was murdered in June 1964 with James Chaney and Michael Schwerner. All three were part of a voter registration drive in Mississippi. In 1989 QC honored three men by hosting a reunion for former volunteers. Now, as the 45th anniversary of Freedom Summer approaches, the college is taking another look at the contributions of students, faculty, and staff.

A course led by David Gerwin (Secondary Education), graduate students involved in the methodology of oral history are interviewing members of the 1960s generation. Bob Wintemute (History) is seeking funding for a February 2009 colloquium that would pair QC activists with scholars of the period, “to bridge the gaps about what we know,” he says. At the Virginia Frese Palmer Conference, an annual Women’s History Month event, distinguished alumnae will discuss “Women, Queens College, and the Civil Rights Movement” (March 16). And at this spring’s Commencement—when legendary civil rights leader Rep. John Lewis will receive an honorary doctorate—a ceremony will salute 1960s alums who fought for social change.

Their efforts merit attention. QC undergraduates joined campus chapters of the Congress of Racial Equality and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, tutored children through the South Jamaica Student Help Project, and demonstrated at the World’s Fair and at local Woolworths. (In 1960, after the chain’s Greensboro, North Carolina branch refused to serve African Americans at the whites-only lunch counter, protesters targeted the company.) Some alumni ventured across the Mason-Dixon line. With Rachel Widdington (Education), they led classes for black students in Prince Edward County, Virginia, which had shut public schools in 1963 to stave off integration; they volunteered in voter registration drives in Mississippi in 1964; and they returned to the state the next summer with Sidney Simon (Education) to rebuild churches burned down by white supremacists.

Visiting campus last September for a Homecoming event organized by Freedom Summer veteran Mark Levy ’64, about 15 alums recalled a time that altered political and personal destinies.

“It was life-changing,” said Michael Wenger ’65, who taught in Jamaica and Prince Edward County and became a public school teacher in West Virginia, his work as a community organizer led to positions in local and state government. In 1997–98, he was deputy director for outreach and program development for President Bill Clinton’s Initiative on Race. Currently Wenger is an adjunct professor of sociology at George Washington University.

Investigative journalist Lucy Komisar ’64, a recipient of Guggenheim and MacArthur Foundation fellowships, found her calling in 1962–63 while editing the Mississippi Free Press, a civil rights weekly. Her resume includes a term as vice president of the National Organization for Women (1970–71) and writing about democracy movements in the developing world. “I rode in a van in El Salvador with the nuns who were later murdered,” Komisar said. Today she tracks offshore bank and corporate secrecy; her freelance articles are copied on her blog. The Komisar Scoop.

Fisher—formerly assistant commissioner of the Westchester County Department of Health, now the executive director of Seeds of Peace, which brings Israeli and Palestinian youth together for conflict resolution—identified herself as a red diaper baby whose family endorsed civil disobedience. “If I hadn’t been arrested by the time I was 18, I couldn’t have gone home,” she declared. In the 1980s, Fisher defied the U.S. embargo to travel to Nicaragua with solidarity organizations delivering humanitarian supplies and computers.

Nonetheless, top honors in the law-breaking category went to freelance book indexer Elliot Linzer ’67, who has been jailed five times to date. Working under Bayard Rustin, he helped organize the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Linzer subsequently became the first draft resister in New York to be declared 1-A. Delinquent. “I used the Selective Service and won,” he announced, to the applause of fellow activists.

Levy, who recently retired as executive director of medical residents’ union CIR/SEIU, collects stories like these from his QC contemporaries. His goal: To preserve their oral histories and archive their materials on campus. “When I retired, I came across big boxes of old photographs and files, many now yellowing and cracking,” he says. “History is useful to pass along.”

“My alumni can tell inspiring stories about what they did when they were young and how they have led lives committed to social justice and public service.”

–Mark Levy ’64, Freedom Summer veteran who is spearheading a project to create an on-campus archive documenting the work Queens College volunteers did in the 1960s.

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Travel expands the mind, particularly when the itinerary is built around a college-level class. So in 2007 Susan Einhorn (Drama) and Clare Carroll (Irish Studies) began creating an interdisciplinary course to be offered through Study Abroad. “Susan and I wanted to bring students to study in Ireland and soak up the culture,” says Carroll. “But we also wanted them to perform the play on campus. There’s so much wonderful Irish drama, and Queens College had never done an Irish play.” A year after its inception, their project, Teaching Theatre in Cultural Context, would win them a President’s Grant for Innovative Teaching.

For their primary texts, Einhorn and Carroll chose two dramas that figure prominently in Irish literary history. The Playboy of the Western World, by turn-of-the-20th-century author J.M. Synge, and Translations, by present-day playwright Brian Friel, who has cited Synge as an influence. To supplement classroom activities, the professors planned field trips, such as an excursion to the Aran Island cottage Synge lived in while he studied the Irish language. They also got tickets to professional theatrical productions and set up events that allowed students to mingle with their counterparts at the National University of Ireland Galway, where Irish Drama in Context was taught in June 2008 with the collaboration of NUIG Professor Nessa Cronin.

For a month, the class’s 16 CUNY undergraduates, all but three of whom were immersed in their subject matter at every turn. “It’s the difference between doing research and going out the door,” explains Einhorn. “You don’t control the way the material hits you; it’s more vital. Perhaps for that reason, participants were exceptionally motivated. “Students were so engaged,” continues Einhorn. “They absorbed everything.”

“Everyone was really into it,” agrees Media Studies major Jamie McCullagh ’09, an Irish Studies minor who, as her name suggests, has Hibernian roots on her father’s side. “I took the course as an opportunity to read the literature of the west.” (The “Western World” in Synge’s title refers to the rugged territory on and near Ireland’s west coast.) One of only four non-actors in the group, McCullagh didn’t have to attend all the drama sessions. In her free time, she explored Galway, visiting a used bookstore, sampling frozen Bulmers hard cider, and—once—helping a squab-chasing local fisherman haul his hook with maggots. “I did it partly to show I was a good tourist,” she adds.

Locked into six days a week of classes and rehearsals, the drama students squeezed in their own encounters with contemporary Ireland. First-time trans-Atlantic traveler Matthew Wood ’09 was delighted by his housing—in a building alongside a picturesque canal—and its proximity to Monroe’s Pub. “Every weekend, Monroe’s had Ceili dancing,” he says. “We met up there with NUIG theater students, who taught us the basics.”

Back on the QC campus last fall, Wood and many of his Study Abroad classmates drew on their experiences as they began rehearsing Playboy, a dark comedy. The plot follows the fortunes of fugitive Christy Mahon, who captivates an entire village with his claim that he killed his father. Although it seems fairly tame by contemporary standards, the three-act play caused riots with its 1907 debut at Dublin’s Abbey Theatre.

To make sure that the work would enjoy a better reception in Flushing, Einhorn relied on people with Irish expertise. Professional dialect coach Stephen Gabis, a Broadway veteran, helped cast members refine their accents. Then, during the first two weeks of October, the performers got pointers from Belfast-born movie star Stephen Rea, who visited QC as an artist-in-residence. Perhaps best known to American audiences for his Oscar-nominated role in The Crying Game, Rea has an extensive stage resume, including an acclaimed turn early in his career as Christy in a production of Playboy mounted by Britain’s National Theatre.

“It’s the greatest Irish play we have in the English language,” says the actor. A longtime supporter of Irish Studies—“to perpetuate the Irish language, he has sent both his sons, now teenagers, to a school where all subjects are taught in it—Rea sat in on literature and history classes and participated in two question-and-answer sessions. The first, for students, was moderated by Carroll; Kevin Whelan, professor of history at Notre Dame University in Dublin, presided over the second, held at the conclusion of Playboy’s opening night on October 16.

“I’m very susceptible to being asked to do things,” remarks Rea. “If people are interested in Irish theater and I can contribute to their understanding, why not?”

Rea was so down-to-earth,” comments Wood, who portrayed Shawn Keogh, Christy’s romantic rival, and rehearsed his characterization after getting notes from the visiting coach. “The next day, I came to rehearsal and I was a new Shawn.” The experience of studying drama in Ireland and then presenting a play here, says Wood, “helped my confidence as a person and an actor.”

Faculty members are equally thrilled with the results. Carroll and Irish history lecturer Patrick McGough are planning a return trip to Ireland, this time focusing on music. Drama, Theatre & Dance Department Chair Charles Repole envisions holding interdisciplinary courses elsewhere in the world. “This program and its success will only be the beginning,” Repole says. “We heard raves from the participants. It’s a template to look at, say, Athens. Maybe we could do a play at the Acropolis.” Actually, Einhorn is putting together a theatrical venture for a different Grecian site: Colonus.

Right: Advice from celebrated Irish actor Stephen Rea (right) makes the role of Christy Mahon for Max Roll ’10, the lead in QC’s recent production of Playboy of the Western World. Above: Elysia Price ’09, and Pam Jasino ’09, portraying village residents, vie for Roll’s attention.
Albert Kapikian ‘52 leads the laboratory battle against lethal intestinal disease

“We have stayed ahead of many illnesses—like smallpox, polio, and tuberculosis—because of the development of vaccines. Vaccines have been a tremendous boon,” observes Albert Z. Kapikian ‘52. At age 78 he leads the effort at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to keep at bay the highly contagious stomach and intesti-
nal diseases caused by viruses.

The numbers are daunting. Each year over 500,000 children under the age of 5, mostly in developing countries, die because of severe diarrhea caused by rotavirus; in the U.S., 55,000-70,000 children in this same age group are hospitalized for rotavirus infections.

In his 51-year career, Kapikian and his colleagues have made enormous strides in researching viral diseases and creating vaccines that one day may greatly diminish those numbers, just as a vaccine made the iron lung a rarity. Over 50 years ago, Albert B. Sabin developed a live vaccine that children could swallow on a sugar cube to prevent polio. The fact that this same age group are hospitalized on a given day. I admired our coach Robert Tierney and stayed in touch with his colleagues. He still holds that post.

Kapikian earned his MD at Cornell University in New York City in 1956. His wife, Catherine, creates religious tapestries, and they have three sons. “I feel blessed that I can work full-time,” says Kapikian, who shows no signs of slowing down. He is espec-
ially eager to “get our rotavirus vaccine to developing countries. The beauty of it is that it will be manufactured at low cost” in countries such as India, China, and Brazil for their own popula-
tions and for other countries in Asia and Africa, and therefore have sustainability. —Donna Shoemaker

Joyce Tischler ‘74 flies in the face of convention to create precedents for animal rights

It was not unusual in the Middle Ages for courts to hear cases against insects and animals, sentencing the guilty to banishment, excommunion, and even death. Modern animal lovers can attribute today’s more tolerant legal view of animals to lawyer Joyce Tischler ‘74, co-founder of the Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF). “Animals are sentient beings,” insists Tischler, who has the luxury of being able to claim that all her clients are innocent.

Her inclinations manifested themselves early. “As soon as I could walk around the block, I was finding injured birds and bringing home cats I thought were homeless,” says the Queens native, who grew up in flushing and Fresh Meadows alongside two older siblings and a shelter named Princess. “When I was six and my turtle died, I held a formal funeral.” Animal welfare wouldn’t be her only concern. At 15 she volunteered for the presiden-
tial campaign of Senator Eugene McCarthy.

Planning to become an attorney, the young activist came to QC a few years later, majoring in political science. She enjoyed communications courses with Prof. Russel Windes, too. “I took every class of his I could,” she notes. Tischler put almost as much energy into looking after the college’s resident feline colony.

“Fairly early on in my freshman year, I noticed the cats in tiny rooms were wearing tiny leashes,” she recalls. “I met other

people who were feeding them and taking care of them. Some of the cats were feral; we didn’t know the word for it at the time.”

Bolstered by cats who had been dumped, the population kept growing, and so did the alpaca/crocheters’ expenses. Spaying and neu-
tering animals was particularly costly. “We were several thousand dollars in debt to local veterinarians,” says Tischler. A sympathet-
ic art professor designed a Campus Cats T-shirt, by selling it, the rescuers—who found homes for almost all of their wards—raised enough money to pay their medical bills.

With her personal debt load at a manageable level, Tischler could afford to leave town upon graduating. She enrolled in the University of San Diego School of Law, where she thrived, mak-
ing law review. She published an article on animal rights, the only topic that interested her.

Hired by a San Francisco firm that did real estate and development work, she moved to the Bay area, where in her spare time she linked up with attorneys who shared her concern for animal rights. In early 1981 one of her colleagues got an SOS from the Animal Protection Institute (API). The U.S. Navy was killing hundreds of wild burros who roamed near the military air-
field in China Lake in the Mojave Desert. Staying up all night to draft documents before the next round of shooting, Tischler filed suit—and got a temporary restraining order. “I spent the next eight months negotiating with the Navy, and we removed a bunch of burros,” she reports. “No more were shot.”

API executives offered the victorious lawyer a job; instead of accepting, she asked for a grant. “They graciously gave us $6000, and I became the first full-time employee of the Animal Legal Defense Fund,” says Tischler. “The first 10 years were very dif-
ficult,” she continues. “I lived on credit cards.”

Today, the ALDF has a $4 million budget, more than 110,000 members, and a dog-friendly headquarters in Santa Clara, California, north of San Francisco. Through its lawsuits, the organization has rescued dogs from hoarders and chimpnakes from trainers who beat them, it has been involved in custody battles, landlord-
tenant disputes, and a ground-breaking, albeit unsuccessful, 1988 effort to block the U.S. Patent Office from awarding patents for genetically altered animals.

“Our over the years we have learned our trade and developed the law as it relates to animals,” Tischler observes. “We’re constantly looking for new legal theorems. We focus our civil litigation on cases in which recovery goes directly to animals. We also assist prosecutors who are handling cruelty cases, find expert witnesses, file amicus curiae briefs, and conduct legal research.”

Practicing what she preaches, Tischler is a strict vegan. “I don’t eat my clients,” she declares. “If more lawyers acted this way, we’d have a better reputation.”

After her husband, a stained-glass artist, died of lung cancer—she lives with her teenage daughter and many rescued animal companions well known to her admirers as the ‘mother of Animal Law.’ Tischler’s influence far beyond her immediate family.

“When I was in law school, there were no animal law classes,” she says. “Today, animal law is taught in 100 law schools. Law

students tell me they’re going to law school in order to practice animal law. Some of the largest firms in the United States are offering their services to us to do pro bono work, which stretches our resources. I’m very optimistic about the future of animal law; it’s mainstream now.” —Leslie Jay
Ongoing

LOUIS ARMSTRONG HOUSE MUSEUM
Corona, Queens
Guided tours every hour on the hour (last tour 4 pm) Tues.–Fri., 10 am–5 pm; Sat. & Sun., 12 noon–5 pm. Closed Mondays, New Year’s Eve, and New Year’s Day.
88 adults/65 seniors, students, children, and groups of eight or more. Members free. For information, call 718-478-8274 or visit KupferbergCenterArts.org and click on Louis Armstrong House museum.

January

THROUGH JANUARY 15
POWER TO THE PEACEFUL: PEACE QUILTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD
Curated by Dr. Rikki Asher
Godwin-Ternbach Museum, Free. Information: call 718-997-4747 or visit KupferbergCenterArts.org and click on Godwin-Ternbach Museum.

February

FEBRUARY 9–MARCH 28
WORKING THROUGH THE GREAT DEPRESSION: WPA PRINTS FROM THE GTM COLLECTION
Curated by Marilyn L. Simon and Amy H. Winter
Godwin-Ternbach Museum, Free. Information: call 718-997-4747 or visit KupferbergCenterArts.org and click on Godwin-Ternbach Museum.

March

1 Sun
CLASSIC HITS FOR KIDS: PERCUSSION
LeFrak Concert Hall, 2 pm. $12. Ages 6–12. Co-presented with The Lawrence Eslan Center for Preparatory Studies in Music at QC.

1 Sun
CLASSIC HITS FOR KIDS: CONCERTI
LeFrak Concert Hall, 2 pm. $12. Ages 6–12.

10 Tue
QC EVENING READINGS LYDIA GENET
LeFrak Concert Hall, 7 pm. $15 at door. Information: call 718-997-4646 or visit www.qc.edu/readings.

14 Sat
JON REGEN TRIO
LeFrak Concert Hall, 8 pm. $32/30 seniors, students, QC alumni, QCID.

20–22 Fri–Sun
ANYTHING GOES
Directed by Charles Re��ole. Music and lyrics by Cole Porter.
Godwin-Ternbach
Music Building, 7 pm. $15 at door. Information: call 718-997-4646 or visit www.qc.edu/readings.

22 Sun
PHILADELPHIA VIRTUOSI, GABRIELA IMREH, PIANO
Works by Bach, Bach/Stokowski, Mozart, and Tchaikovsky.
LeFrak Concert Hall, 2 pm. $36/34 seniors, students, QC alumni, QCID.

26–29 Thu–Sun
ANYTHING GOES
Goldstein Theatre, Thurs., 7 pm. Fri., 8 pm & Sun., 3 pm. $33/31 seniors, students, QC alumni, QCID; Sat., 8 pm. $38/36 seniors, students, alumni, QCID.

April

4 Sat
CLASSIC HITS FOR KIDS: OPERA
LeFrak Concert Hall, 2 pm. $12. Ages 6–12.

11 Sat
JANE MONHEIT
LeFrak Concert Hall, 8 pm. $36/34 seniors, students, QC alumni, QCID.

19 Sun
CIRQUE USA ODYSSEY
Golden Auditorium, 3 pm. $34. Ages 5 and up.

26 Sun
ANNE AKIKO MEYERS, VIOLIN
Works by Mozart, Tchaikovsky, Piazzolla, Vaughan Williams.
LeFrak Concert Hall, 2 pm. $36/34 seniors, students, QC alumni, QCID.

28 Tue
QC EVENING READINGS
A 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Work of Philip Roth
With Philip Roth, Norman Manea, Groi Marcus, Joyce Carol Oates & Norman Rush
Music Building, 7 pm. $25 at door. Information: call 718-997-4646 or visit www.qc.edu/readings.

May

17 Sun
AWADAGIN PRATT, PIANO & ZUILL BAILEY, CELLO
Works by Bux, Shostakovich, Mendelssohn, and Brahms.
LeFrak Concert Hall, 2 pm. $36/34 seniors, students, QC alumni, QCID.

Your Guide to the Best of the Arts in Queens SPECIAL PULL-OUT CALENDAR

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halls all over the world. Fidelio followed a different trajectory. In April 2006 the Swedish-born or violence. Fortunately, the career of Erika Sunnegårdh ’99 has sorts of miseries before succumbing to tuneful bouts of disease

stages in her operatic career

erika sunnegårdh ’99 reaches the top

head; here, she sings the title role in Richard Strauss’s

Music Center, the Britten-Pears School for Advanced Musical

“I needed to be able to fail without everyone knowing about it.”

Sunnegårdh says.

and the chorus master of the Royal Opera of Stockholm; her

father was a vocal professor at the Royal Academy of Music

probably inherited it. She grew up in Stockholm, where her

sight it seems inevitable. If there’s a gene for singing, Sunnegårdh

Fascinated by her back story, Scandinavian critics hailed her
debut in the demanding part. “[Her voice is] so rich in colors that

in a United Nations battalion as part of the South Asia bloc.

a question, I’m expected to know the answer.”

27-person team brought home the Outstanding Delegation award
for representing Venezuela, plus another prize. Exceeding the
portfolios of most teams, 12 students also represented Barbados
on six committees. Then, at the National Model UN conference
held right before the election in Washington, D.C., the team
picked up two additional awards for representing Italy.

As head delegate for a college Model UN delegation, Tarek
notes, “You’re responsible for knowing every single thing about
every different committee. If one of the delegates comes up with
a question, I’m expected to know the answer.”

Then it’s up to me to sing well. If I hadn’t been ready, I would

in for an ailing Karita Mattila at the Met. Singing there “was an

Turandot. “They were hard up,” says Sunnegårdh, displaying an

her for the title role in the company’s fall 2004 production of

Turandot. “They were hard up,” says Sunnegårdh, displaying an

Massachusetts, where her family had retired. “I sometimes run into people who remember that I sat under the piano when she was teaching,” Sunnegårdh says.

After a flirtation with dance, the teenaged Erika realized that

she had greater aptitude for music and concluded, “don’t swim upstream if you can ride the waves.” To immerse herself, the choir school alumnus went outside Sweden, enrolling in the Manhattan School of Music. “There was anonymity,” Sunnegårdh explains. “I needed to be able to fail without everyone knowing about it.” She also attended the Israel Vocal Arts Institute, Tanglewood Music Center, the Britten-Pears School for Advanced Musical Studies, and the International Institute of Vocal Arts.

For graduate work, she craved a supportive environment, and found it at QC’s Aaron Copland School of Music. Unlike, say, a pianist or a violinist, a classical singer has to refine her instrument while learning how to use it. The process can be slow and frustrating. “I had hit the wall,” Sunnegårdh admits. “When I came here, it was nurturing.”

After completing her master’s degree, she continued to take voice lessons, including some sessions with her mom. Skipping the lighter soubrette roles that many sopranos use as launch vehicles—“I couldn’t wrap my voice around them”—she sang at recitals, church services, and funerals. She paid her rent by waitressing. The future superstar was in her late 20s when she auditioned for Sweden’s Malmo Opera, which promptly signed her for the title role in the company’s fall 2004 production of Turandot. “They were hard up,” says Sunnegårdh, displaying an un-diva-ish penchant for self-deprecation.

More often than not, the heroines of grand operas endure all sorts of miseries before succumbing to tuneful bouts of disease or violence. Fortunately, the career of Erika Sunnegårdh ’99 has followed a different trajectory. In April 2006 the Swedish-born soprano filled in as Leonore in the Metropolitan Opera’s produc-
tion of Fidelio. Since then, she’s been a hot property in concert halls all over the world.

Her overnight success was years in the making, but in hind-
sight it seems inevitable. If there’s a gene for singing, Sunnegårdh probably inherited it. She grew up in Stockholm, where her father was a vocal professor at the Royal Academy of Music and the chorus master of the Royal Opera of Stockholm; her mother, a soprano who had retired from the stage, taught voice at home after her husband died. “I sometimes run into people who remember that I sat under the piano when she was teaching,” Sunnegårdh says.

When the professor for Research in United Nations took a sabbatical, Dewan Tarek convinced the chair of the political science department to let the col-
lege’s Model UN Club manage the course, guided by a faculty advis-
or. Tarek, the head of the club and an accounting/finance major with a minor in political science, would be the teaching assistant.

A two-month effort to “recruit two dozen brand-new delegates and train them” paid off, Tarek notes. When QC’s fledgling team of student ambassadors deployed their skills at the first annual CUNY Model United Nations Conference in March 2008, two members won awards for representing India and St. Lucia.

At a National Model UN Conference later that month, QC’s 27-person team brought home the Outstanding Delegation award for representing Venezuela, plus another prize. Exceeding the portfolios of most teams, 12 students also represented Barbados on six committees. Then, at the National Model UN conference held right before the election in Washington, D.C., the team picked up two additional awards for representing Italy.

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notes, “You’re responsible for knowing every single thing about
every different committee. If one of the delegates comes up with
a question, I’m expected to know the answer.”

Tarek understands why a world forum for peacekeeping is es-

tential. His father served in the Bangladesh army for 16 years and
in a United Nations battlefield as part of the South Asia bloc’s

reconstruction efforts following the genocide in Cambodia.

Tarek has guided the Model UN Club in efforts both compas-
sionate and environmentally aware, including setting up collec-
tion boxes in affinity areas for unwanted cell phones and Black-
berries. Now, instead of polluting landfills, these devices will be refurbished for use in the developing world.

Last June members of the club were in Fushan on the day a massive earthquake struck southwest China. They noticed how the Chinese community set up sidewalk tables to raise funds and sign up volunteers to fly in for the relief effort. In talking with the Tzu Chi Foundation, a nonprofit welfare organization coordinat-

ing the effort, says Tarek, “We had this idea.” The idea became a fund-raiser in the college’s LeFrak Concert Hall. Joined by other campus groups, members of the club organized the benefit, which included martial arts demonstrations, the donation of artworks for a silent auction, and Chinese music and cuisine. The evening raised $7,000 for Tzu Chi’s relief efforts.

Tarek—who left Bangladesh with his parents and brother in 1996—and other QC student leaders from immigrant back-
grounds have been reaching out to the local community in other ways. Cristina Jiménez ’07 (Ecuador), Jonathan Gilad ’08 (Israel), and Tarek devoted two years to establishing the Dream Mentor-
ship Program, which was recently awarded $30,000 from the Queens College Foundation. The program enlists QC students to mentor local high school students from immigrant backgrounds to prepare them for college.

Tarek plans to become a CPA to help him pay for business school. With an MBA, he hopes to work for the UN under the auspices of either the World Trade Organization, the Internation-
al Monetary Fund, or the World Bank. —Donna Shoemaker

DOCTOR WITH A Mission

Carolann Najarian ’62 runs a foundation that brings aid to Armenia

Mountainsous, landlocked Armenia—intersection of Eastern Europe and Western Asia, home to Mount Ararat, where Noah’s Ark is said to have halted—Carolann Najarian ’62 knows well. She has made over 50 trips bringing medical supplies and other humanitarian assistance to Armenia, starting when an earth-
quake struck the country in 1988.

American born, Bronx bred, Carolann Abrahamian was nine when her Armenian-born father told her about the murders and forced marches that killed 1.5 million Armenians throughout the Ottoman Empire early in the last century. After hearing that, she wanted to be a doctor.

Najarian has been addressing medical needs in Armenia, her father’s homeland, since an earthquake devastated the country in 1988.

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quake struck the country in 1988.

American born, Bronx bred, Carolann Abrahamian was nine when her Armenian-born father told her about the murders and forced marches that killed 1.5 million Armenians throughout the Ottoman Empire early in the last century. After hearing that, she wanted to be a doctor.

Najarian has been addressing medical needs in Armenia, her father’s homeland, since an earthquake devastated the country in 1988.
Yet she majored in music (she played the piano) when she went to Queens because her parents could not pay for medical school. In 1988—a 6.9 magnitude earthquake struck near Yerevan, capital of Armenia, killing 25,000 people. Najarian spent three weeks collecting medical supplies from the Armenian-American community in and out of Boston, hired a cargo plane, and with another doctor took off with 80,000 pounds of medical supplies.

Armenia was in turmoil then. Soviet soldiers with machine guns boarded the plane to investigate, but she was able to reassure them that she was only carrying relief aid. After that, she distributed supplies and helped Armenian refugees fleeing ethnic conflict in Nagorno-Karabagh, an Armenian enclave surrounded by Azerbaijan.

Shortly after returning from that first trip, Najarian gave up her medical practice and established the Armenian Health Alliance Inc., a nonprofit organization with many donors that primarily funds projects in Armenia: hospitals, schools, students, orphans, and veterans. It founded a primary care center, a feeding program for pregnant women, a dental clinic, and the Hope-Sister Project for women refugees. Using their own resources, she and her husband rehabbed a 4th-century basilica.

In 1995 she retired from medical practice in the U.S. to continue her work and to write a book about her experiences, A Call from Home. Armenia and Karabagh: My Journal. “I wanted to convey that after the disaster there were people who were living in disaster, and that the real problem was, what is it to be human,” she says.

The Najarians have also given their support to numerous projects in the United States: a tour of Armenian musicians, an annual genocide studies lecture, and minority scholarships for women. Carnahm also recently gave $10,000 to Queens College, which she says gave her a great educational foundation for her later work.

Life has improved in Armenia since Najarian first went there, and at this stage in her life she goes there less often. But she remembers the solidarity of the early days, living and working with Armenians—when there was no heat or electricity and little food—and after meals huddling together and talking. “You sat by candlelight, she says, “and you discovered your common roots.”–Margo Nash

The National Hockey League tapped Supovitz in 1992 to be the league’s major events—including the Super Bowl, the Pro Bowl, and the NFL Draft—Supovitz doesn’t hesitate in crediting his experiences as a biology major for the success he’s enjoyed. “My background in biology helped me set up and test hypotheses and derive data that help you make decisions,” he observes, speaking from the NFL’s Park Avenue corporate headquarters.

“I think that I approach my job very scientifically—though there’s a lot of soft thinking in this job as well. Being a bio major was very time consuming, and there was no direct correlation between the number of credits you earned and the amount of time invested,” he continues. “What I do now is very similar: It’s not a 9 to 5 job, it’s not a five-day-a-week job. It’s more of a lifestyle than a career.”

He was always interested in science. It was my favorite subject in school. I started out being fascinated by taxonomy,” Supovitz notes, recalling many childhood trips to a favorite New York City institution. “What was great about the Museum of Natural History back then was that in addition to the bio side you had the Hayden Planetarium, and anyone I could reach out and touch a meteorite, that was pretty cool.”

Starting with his senior year in high school, Supovitz had to juggle the demands of his academic workload with his job as an usher at Radio City Music Hall. Often working until 4 am, he would go home, have breakfast, then go to class. Accepted for graduate study at the University of Texas and Clemson University but unable to afford it, he returned to Radio City to earn his tuition. It was 1979, a pivotal year for both the company and Supovitz’s career. Radio City was abandoning its traditional format of a stage show and a movie in favor of just staging events, such as the Christmas Show. The company offered Supovitz a management job, and he rose through a series of positions while taking business courses at Baruch. Eventually he was responsible for developing a special events business that would allow Radio City to stage productions outside the theater.

Ironically, his Radio City position would provide his first Super Bowl experience, when in 1988 he served as associate producer of the halftime show for Super Bowl XXII. “You’re not going to believe it,” he laughs about that show. “It was Chaubby Checker, the Rockettes, and 88 grand pianos!”

In 1989 Supovitz and two colleagues formed their own events company, Aventures. Among their accomplishments were Operations: Welcome Home at the end of the Gulf War, and the 1989 and 1990 U.S. Olympic Festivals in Oklahoma City and Minneapolis.

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When Nick Copeli graduates this spring, he’ll embark on a medical career by way of the Mount Sinai School of Medicine’s Humanities and Medicine program. He’ll also be the first Queens College graduate to be admitted to this program, which has accepted few public university students.

“The program is literally an experiment,” says the Macaulay Honors College student and anthropology major. “They wanted to see if students with no pre-med background can go to medical school and perform just as well as students who are entrenched in the sciences during college.”

“I told them I want to do public health abroad,” says Copeli.

Nick Copeli ’09 will enter an elite med school program for non-science majors

REACHING Mount Sinai

The Macaulay Honors College and the University’s Liberal Arts Program have worked to create a curriculum that is both rigorous and flexible, allowing students to pursue their own interests. Copeli is a perfect example of this approach. He is a member of a hall of fame, having been inducted into the Event Industry Hall of Fame in 2006. When he was a high school junior, Copeli was accepted for graduate study at the University of Texas and Clemson University but unable to afford it, he returned to Radio City to earn his tuition. It was 1979, a pivotal year for both the company and Supovitz’s career. Radio City was abandoning its traditional format for a movie in favor of just staging events, such as the Christmas Show. The company offered Supovitz a management job, and he rose through a series of positions while taking business courses at Baruch. Eventually he was responsible for developing a special events business that would allow Radio City to stage productions outside the theater.

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The National Hockey League tapped Supovitz in 1992 to be the league’s major events—including the Super Bowl, the Pro Bowl, and the NFL Draft—a guru of events management. He has collected some of his knowledge in two volumes, The Sports Event, and has written articles in Playbook and Dollars and Events. And like many an athlete, he is a member of a hall of fame, having been inducted into the Event Industry Hall of Fame in 2006. Bob Suter
1953: After graduation Agnes Meddy Hay went to Wyoming where she married a cattle rancher and purchased cattle for 13 years. After her husband died, she earned a degree in Russian language studies at the University of Wisconsin, and then drove with her four children to Penn State, where she had offered her a Scholars Fellowship, to pursue her MA. Agnes worked in Penn State’s libraries until retiring in 1993. She now lives in Port Matilda, PA, where she enjoys her six grandchildren and four horses. . . 1959: Lea Kanezinger and Joan Kaza. (3), who married in 2004, spent and Krasnoger Joan Stern Mazza until retiring in 1993. She now lives in Penn State’s libraries and worked in Penn State’s libraries. . . 1960: Irene Lynn Newell has 25 years of professional experience. . . . Harold Rosenbaum (1974) received the Laurel Award from the American Composers Alliance at its annual Festival of American Music in June. The organization honored Harold, a celebrated choral conductor and the founder of the New York Virtuoso Singers, for his long-standing support of works by contemporary composers. . . 1971: Barry Bendes, a partner in (SelectBooks). In addition to seeing exhibits paintings, prints, and . . . 1973: Elliott Abemayer is a professor of surgery at UCL and a civic chair in the division of head and neck surgery. Elliot’s practice is focused on the treatment of benign and malignant tumors of the head and neck and the surgical treatment of disorders of the thyroid and parathyroid glands. . . . 1976) has drawn on her experiences as an elementary school teacher to write fiction for young readers. . . . 2004: Mitchell Raps was recently appointed administrator of South Brook. . . . 2008: Edwin is a member of the Ohio . . . 2010: Irene Rosemung Fairey has left academia for art. Retired from teaching English and Linguistics at Northwestern University, she exhibits paintings, prints, and sculpture at galleries in the Boston area, where she has lived for many years. . . . 1953: Richard Klein, a doctor specializing in internal medicine and infectious diseases, has just published his memoir, From Anecdote to Antidote: Medical Memoirs and Practical Prescriptions from a Neighborhood Neat (Selectbook). In addition to seeing patients, Richard teaches at New York Medical College, volunteers with community organizations, and fights cancer patients and their families to hospitals, free of charge—his an instrument-rated pilot since . . . 1960: State University honored Edwin M. Cooperman with the Distinguished Service Award at a spring 2008 commencement. A former chair of the Travelers Bank Group, Edwin is a member of the Ohio State University Foundation Board as well as a member of the Queens College Foundation. . . . 1961: Carol Glazer (MS ’56) has been designated a senior investment management consultant by the managed money unit of Citigroup’s Smith Barney division. She joined Smith Barney in 2006 after more than 25 years at Morgan Stanley. . . . 1963: Eugene Fidelis recently joined the Yale Law School faculty as the Florence Roget Senior Lecturing Law in a law. A partner at Feldman Tucker Lefler Fidelis LLP in Washington, DC, and the founding president of the National Institute of Military Justice, Gene began teaching at Yale in 1993. . . . 1966: Lynn Weisberg is an executive director of the Institute for Expressive Analysis. A psychoanalyst in private practice and a registered yoga teacher, Lynn is also a book review editor for The Psychoanalytic Review. . . . 1967: Philip Zuckman and his wife Deborah Gross Zuckman were selected for summer fellowships at the Jula and David White Artists. Their Colony in Cucadian Colony, Costa Rica Food and Pepper are danceable partners; he is an associate professor of studio arts and the Art Institute of Philadelphia, and she is a project manager for the Philadelphia Phila Arts Program . . . 1970: Fred Raphael’s film, starring Mario Puzo, released on the to the theaters, was a hit in Europe. . . . 1971: Barry Bendes, a partner in (SelectBooks). In addition to seeing exhibits paintings, prints, and . . . 1973: Elliott Abemayer is a professor of surgery at UCL and a civic chair in the division of head and neck surgery. Elliot’s practice is focused on the treatment of benign and malignant tumors of the head and neck and the surgical treatment of disorders of the thyroid and parathyroid glands. . . . 1976) has drawn on her experiences as an elementary school teacher to write fiction for young readers. . . . 1976: Robert Peppler, a professor of . . .
operation in Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi for the 2010 Census. During a previous assignment at U.S. Census headquarters in Maryland, Gabriel served as a corporate recruiter, receiving the Commerce Department’s Equal Opportunity Award in recognition of his superior work with Hispanic employees . . . 1989: Alan Barela was among six analysts, experts, activists, and managers who were named Millennium Rising Stars of Corporate Governance by the Yale School of Management. Inaugurated this year, the annual list honors outstanding governance executives who are younger than 40. Alan is vice president of internal control function at DAC Inc. . . . 1991: Douglas Kneehans (MA) has been appointed dean of the University of Cincinnati’s College-Conservatory of Music. Douglas returned to the U.S. with his family, having served since 2000 as director and professor of music for the Conservatorium of Music at the University of Tamao . . . Michel Nadeau (MAE) has drawn on his extensive experience in teaching band in Cooma’s public schools to publish his first book of Band Brilliance, a comprehensive method book for brass, woodwind, and percussion instruments. Band Brilliance includes sight-reading exercises, rhythm charts, a jazz section, and full-band arrangements; free tutorials are available online at http://bandbrilliance.com . . . 1992: Rebecca (Tapié) Brazzane has joined the New York office of law firm Thompson Hine LLP in the business litigation practice group. She earned her JD at Brooklyn Law School . . . Cynthia Millman (MS) partnered with dancer and choreographer Frankie Manning on his autobiography, which was published last year. Frankie Manning: Ambassador of Lindy Hop (Temple University Press) grew out of a project Cynthia initiated as a grad student at QC’s library school . . . Mary Margaret Nevins (MA) is the only non-faculty member to provide academic advisement to students at CUNY Law School, where she is director of academic planning and programming. Last May she participated in her second QC commencement, receiving a master’s in urban administration. Mary has strong family ties to the college; one of her sisters works in Student Life and the other works in the Sociology Department . . . 1993: Alfred Erdmann was chosen from a pool of 500 applicants to officiate at the Little League European Regional Final in Kutno, Poland, last summer. A second-generation volunteer umpire for the league, he assisted presides over games on the diamonds of Rodgework, Gladendale, Middle Village, and Maspeth, where his two children play. Out of uniform, Alfred is a partner at the New York accounting firm Ecker & Lubin . . . Joseph Loulier is a portfolio manager for MKM Longboat Capital Management. Joseph earned his MD and PhD degrees from the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, where his research on “DNA-Based Computers” received the Paul Ehrlich Award . . . 1996: Elena Oraru has been promoted to senior manager in the Manhattan office of J.H. Cohn LLP; the largest independent accounting and consulting firm in the northeast, Elena commutes to work from East Meadow . . . 1997: Dean Radinovskiy was among the artists included in Post No Bih, a group show presented last summer by Long Island City’s Galerie Paluku. An 80-foot construction wall painted gallery white, the exhibition space was open round the clock, thanks to its location at 11th Street and Jackson Avenue, next to the Paluku Bridge . . . 1998: Jonathan Weber played at Shea Stadium in July; a violist, he was in the musicians’ lineup for Billy Joel’s final concert at the stadium . . . 1999: Earl Fyffe (MA ’91) was among the artists featured in the UnConnor (SIC) Festival, a one-day event held on September 20 in Brooklyn’s hip Williamsburg neighborhood . . . Richard Louisaint continued his education at Brooklyn College, earning an MFA in creative writing. He’s also a photographer; his work was included in two shows over the summer. To learn more about his career, visit his Web site at www.richardlouisaint.com . . . 2001: Akira Ohnishi, author of South Aslidi, nominated by the Jerusalem Post for Best New Jewish Blog of 2005, has continued his work with his wife, graphic artist Stiya Okitsu ’00, on Surviving. The nonfiction book explores Akira’s personal saga as a social worker who assisted Holocaust survivors and discovered, during his conversion to Judaism, that he was the grandson of a man who had suppressed his Jewish identity. The book is available at www.akiraohnishi.com . . . 2004: Chang Soo Choi reports that his opera, Mun Bong Flowers (The Seven Flowers), performed in the National Theater of Korea in honor of the country’s civil rights movement. The opera premiered in 2007 . . . 2006: The jazz Web site AMBluZoo.com featured a review of Here for Now, a new CD by tenor saxophonist Kenji Omasa . . . John Rodger continued his vocal training at Indiana University, earning a master’s degree. An alumn of young artists programs at Opera North, where he sang Pong and covered Calaf in Turandot, and Glenglassa Opera, where he covered Claudius in the early Wagner work Das Liebesverbot, he will be a studio artist with the Saratoga Opera in 2009 . . . 2008: Basia Revi (Barbara Rozewska-Gajdek) (MA) was the subject of a QQA column in the October 2008 issue of Classical Singer. A mezzo-soprano, Basia reached the finals in the National Professional Division of the magazine’s Aud/Sing contest earlier this year.

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Amanda Mandapol Talty, Director of the Annual Fund, at 718-997-9122 or at qmag@qc.cuny.edu.

191 Years of Teaching

Collectively, Robert Bittman, Andrew Harker, Joel Mandelbaum, Corinne Milles ’63, and Patricia Rachal have worked at QC for close to two centuries, becoming educational institutions in their own right. Here is news of their latest projects. Why not write to us at qmag@qc.cuny.edu and share your stories of these Bittman professors— or any other professors you remember—anybody?

Robert Bittman

Students in Bittman’s first class, on organic chemistry, did Dennis Lotta ’74, who became a member of the chemistry faculty at Emory University and co-inventor of the anti-HIV drug Emtricitabine. “I joke with him that he would not have made his discoveries without me,” says Bittman, who now teaches advanced undergraduate and graduate-level courses, mentors PhD students, and runs a research group with post-docs. Specializing in lipids—fat-soluble molecules—involves understanding biological functions, Bittman has received over $7.8 million in National Institutes of Health grants since 1971.

Queens College Association
Andrew Hacker
Professor Emeritus of Political Science at QC

“Jill, you’re teaching,” says Hacker. “I’m still teaching,” he says. “Eighteen-year-olds are all the same. You can’t change them. You can’t change people.”

Andrew Hacker

Joel Mandelbaum
Professor Emeritus of Music at QC

Mandelbaum made his campus debut as a lecturer in music appreciation at Queens College in the fall of 1965. He was asked to teach his students to “think critically about the music they were hearing,” but he was also asked to take into consideration the students’ backgrounds and experiences. As a result, Mandelbaum developed a unique approach to teaching music, focusing on the interaction between music and culture. He also encouraged his students to think about the role of music in society and the ways in which it can be used to address social issues. Mandelbaum’s approach to teaching music was innovative and influential, and his students were inspired by his passion for the subject. They were also impressed by his ability to make music accessible and relevant to their lives. Mandelbaum retired from teaching in 1995, but his legacy lives on through the Mandelbaum Center for Music and the Arts, which was established in his honor. The center is a hub for music education and performance, and it continues to inspire students to think critically about music and its role in society. Mandelbaum’s legacy is a testament to the power of music to inspire and transform lives. 

Joel Mandelbaum

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...about the human genome." For genetics and genomics, "to educate non-scientists...set up a center on campus...with their doctor," Michels comments. Department chair since 2001, she will take a sabbatical this spring, when she hopes to..."It’s an important course for people...about their own bodies and enabling them to speak...with a doctor," they comment.
Patricia Rachal
Professor of Political Science

This seems like a long time to me,” says Rachal, whose nearly 30 years at Queens College have earned her the newsletter’s president’s group. Although she chairs her department for more than a decade, she is still continuing to teach each course every semester. “I have to,” she explains, “in case our students are like my. Her expertise in intergroup collaboration recently won her a five-year federal grant of $2.8 million. As principal investigator for the New York Deaf-Blind Collaborative, Rachal will assess the needs of deaf-blind children, their families, and their service providers, and to then find ways to improve services for this population.
Two Hall of Famers  Since meeting in a mathematics class at Queens College over 40 years ago, Russell and Alice (Feldman) Artzt have done remarkable things: Russ is the co-founder of Computer Associates (now CA), one of the world's largest software companies, and Alice has been a long-time professor in QC's secondary education department and co-founder and project director of the innovative TIME 2000 mathematics program. The couple—pictured here at the 2008 commencement exercises, where they received the President’s Medal for service to the college and community—both earned another distinction last year: Russ was inducted into the Long Island Technology Hall of Fame, and Alice was inducted into the Long Island Mathematics Education Hall of Fame.