Volunteer

Niamh

A warm fire roaring, sips of hot cocoa, and nibbles of apple pie. An authentic winter night of an American dream. There are many people who get to take part in these simple pleasures on a nightly basis. These are the people living in the lap of luxury in comfortable homes and maintaining steady jobs in this hectic economy. Some people are not so fortunate. These are the people who spend their winter nights in shelters. Hospitals. Nursing homes. They may have never come face-to-face with the American dream. So get involved! Lend a hand! Help them come to know the treasures you may take for granted. Why shouldn’t you? You will meet amazing people and feel the rewards associated with giving. Volunteer at a food pantry for an afternoon. Read stories and play games with patients at a children’s hospital. Go visit the elderly at a nursing home. These individuals do not always have an opportunity to get out and see the world, so you must bring the world to them! Even after the holidays are over and life returns to its everyday, run-of-the-mill routine, go out and continue to engage yourself with your community. You could shovel the driveway of the neighbors with the newborn. Plant a tree at your town’s common and dedicate it to someone who has made a difference in your life. Don’t just sit around doing nothing, waiting for the world to change on its own. Be the change. Get engaged. Get interested. Become aware! There are multitudes of fun activities and service opportunities waiting for you to claim them. Do you like music? Offer to help with a public music group. See if there are any community-sponsored classes available in subjects that intrigue you. Search for that knitting class (a guilty pleasure?). You could meet someone who just needs a listener. You could save a life. Be available. Be helpful. Be caring. You will receive thanks. Maybe not in words, but instead, in a cookie given to you by one of your cohorts in that cooking class. Perhaps a hug from the little kid you read to and did crafts with for an afternoon. It could even come in the form of a smile and a slightly tearful goodbye from one of the patients at the nursing home you visited and shared stories with. There are hundreds of beneficial organizations started every year by Average Joes who just want to make a difference. I encourage and challenge you to become a maker of brighter days. After all, ’tis the season.
From Internship to Capstone

Jacob’s Pillow Dance

Alicia Foste, Class of 2010

Last spring, school ended, I spent two weeks at home, packed everything back in my car, and moved to the Berkshires for 15 weeks. I had been selected as the Graphic and Web Design Intern at Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival in Becket, Massachusetts. I had no clue what I had gotten myself into. I knew nothing about dance or the 33 other interns I would be spending my entire summer with. All I knew was that I would be living in a cabin, with seven other girls, in the middle of the woods, ten miles from the nearest gas station, and working six days a week. I never would have guessed that these 33 strangers would become some of my closest and most trusted friends.

I quickly learned that Jacob’s Pillow is America’s longest running dance festival. It was founded in the 1930s by American dance pioneer, Ted Shawn. Dance soloists and companies come from countries around the world to perform on one of the Pillow’s three stages. I would have the opportunity to watch classical ballet, tap, hip-hop, contemporary, flamenco, and modern dance performances free of charge, all summer.

The summer was absolutely amazing. I learned about dance, and life in general. One of the most important ideas I took away from my internship was the importance of dance in the art world today. We had history lessons about Jacob’s Pillow and Ted Shawn so that we would be able to share the importance of this “certain place” with the thousands of visitors we would meet over the course of the summer. Dance had never been an important aspect of my life. I’m an athlete and dance was always just too feminine for my liking. I met some of the most powerful, athletic people I’ve ever met in my life this past summer and developed an appreciation for dance that could be more easily equated with my appreciation for soccer or basketball.

My experience as an intern this summer sparked the creation of my Capstone project. As a graphic design major I had no clue how to incorporate an interdisciplinary component into my Capstone. After spending time at Jacob’s Pillow, it only seemed fitting that my project should include dance. I decided to write a book about Ted Shawn and Jacob’s Pillow. After working in the marketing department at Jacob’s Pillow for 15 weeks, I learned how important it is to the Pillow to develop a young audience. They want to attract a younger audience to help maintain consistent audience levels as the current audience ages and isn’t able to attend the performances.

My book is going to target younger audiences, particularly other people my age, who don’t understand the concept of dance being both an athletic and artistic experience, or those individuals who have no knowledge about dance forms. I am writing a “research paper” based off of what I learned this summer and research I have performed since my return, and I am designing a book that incorporates skills from my major course of study. I want to share my new found love, and I say that apprehensively because I’m not sure if it is really love, for dance with others.

Positively Rational

Amanda Gibbons, Class of 2013

On the wall of Mrs. Anti’s high school English classroom, circa 2004, there is a small piece of paper. On this easily overlooked postcard typed in green ink, there is a quote that can be read easily from the desk in the second row, farthest to the right. I was absolutely captivated by what was on the board, insists the current English major, but I was also able to learn by staring at the wall. The wall’s message was: “The optimist fell ten stories, and at each window bar, he shouted to his friends, ‘alright so far.’”

Initially, this positive plummeter may seem quite dim. Luckily, he has a supporter like me to explain why he is clearly a strong and intelligent individual. The reasoning works similarly to Pascal’s Wager, and in this case, wagering for good dominates wagering against good. If circumstances turn out wonderfully, and you were focusing on the positive, then everything is great. If circumstances turn out to be unfavorable, and you were focusing on the positive, then everything is still great, in a way. Life happens, and you can accept unfortunate occurrences without making yourself miserable. No matter what the outcome, focusing on the negative gets you nowhere, because it results in excess negativity and stress. Rationality requires you to wager for good.

Apple to Apples

Zesty Helen Keller

Michelle Tabler, Class of 2013

With the wind whipping violently, as it always does on the winds hill of Colby-Sawyer, and the air catching a nip of winter, a few courageous honors students braved the weather in search of an epic Apples to Apples game on November 12. Eight students gathered at the Lodge at 8:00pm around a rectangular table, scents of popcorn chicken and quizzical outbursts filling the air, as they pulled out the familiar green and red cards bearing the smiling apple. Nouns and adjectives were written on each, some with common words like “sunset” or “comical,” while others carried more exotic and eyebrow-raising verbage like “pond scum” and “slipadized.”

As the cards were being passed out, Megan Ruggiero devoured the infamous snacks of chips, pretzels, and Oreos, with a side of soda, making for a “good-time” atmosphere. With seven cards in one hand and a gaggle of barbecue chips in the other, the Apples to Apples game, honors-styled, commenced.

The eight girls at the table began the game on a cautious note, testing each other’s humor as they started to get to know one another, each individual from a different grade and major across the Honors Program. “Creative” was paired with Pablo Picasso, while Democrats and Republicans took hits with “obnoxious” and “overrated.” Cards stacked up quickly, scattered throughout the players’ winnings, each person ended up with one or two at hand. Competition and laughs were, the sugary Pepsi flowed around the table; two orders of popcorn chicken were ordered and eyed by lusty stomachs. A few friends of the honors group appeared and helped out, giving hints to the best card and even joining in on the fun.

Half-way through the monumental game, the mighty “Helen Keller” card was played, facing off against a brute force of equally random and captivating nouns. She came close to winning, mostly by default, what she was held out by another card, making it a historic night of Apples to Apples. The game wound down as the clock neared nine and busy schedules were once more in mind. A few girls stayed later, playing as a group of four until the fun began to slow and finally, everyone left into the cold, starry night with collections of snacks and a new group of friendly faces in mind as well.

Formerly Green Festivals

Lindsey Hauck, Class of 2013

It’s true—we’re all a little preoccupied and stressed at the end of the semester. Planning our winter break, studying and writing papers, and trying to keep warm take up plenty of time and energy. With the craziness of finals upon us, it’s sometimes easy to forget that we’re right in the middle of the holiday season. Since most of us don’t have decorations and holiday treats piled up in our rooms, it sometimes doesn’t feel like the holidays at all, and even holiday commercials can get a little annoying when you’re out of money. Luckily, there’s a free and fun way to celebrate the holidays in style, right here on campus. You need to relax, take a break, and celebrate the season, the Snowflake Social is the perfect opportunity for you! Snowflake Social, formerly known as Green Festives, is your chance to indulge in the joys of the season before diving into finals week. On Friday, December 11th, the Wesson Honors Suite will be decked out as a winter wonderland for students to get into the holiday mood, complete with snowflakes and penguins. Stop by between 1:00pm and 5:00pm with friends for games like Apples to Apples, as well as holiday music, plenty of delicious foods, and your favorite, seasonal movies. There will also be prizes galore! You can even win prizes in the ornament decorating contest! All completed ornaments will be donated to the Windy Hill School. All members of the CSC community are invited to the Snowflake Social, whether you celebrate Hanukkah, Christmas, or Winter Solstice. It will be a great chance to have fun with friends and blow off some steam before we all take our exams and head out of New London until January!
**Travel Log**

**To Capitol Hill and Beyond**

Megan Ruggiero,
Class of 2010

On October 28th, Professor Ann Page Stecker, Meghan Steele (’11), Amanda Gibbons (’12), and I left a rainy and chilly New London behind to serve as Colby-Sawyer’s representatives at the National Collegiate Honors Council’s 44th Annual Conference. This year, the conference’s host city was our Nation’s Capital, Washington D.C., a city that I have longed to return to since a brief and hurried vacation to the Capital in sixth grade. All I remember about my initial trip to D.C. was my aunt’s abnormally friendly and cuddly cat, the horrendous splinter in my finger that I received upon departing from Arlington National Cemetery, and a faint glimpse of pulling FDR’s finger at the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial. I can honestly say that my mind and maturity level were at a different (and better) place this time around.

![Part of the FDR Memorial](image)

The four of us spent our first night in Washington sifting through a 144-page program for the conference and attempting to determine which workshops, presentations, and round table discussions would be the most beneficial in terms of helping improve and enhance our own honors program. If only Hermione Granger could have lent us her Time-Turner! There were so many options listed that the four of us decided to go our separate ways for most of the conference to maximize the amount of knowledge and ideas we could consume as a group.

After spending the first afternoon at the NCHC conference in an intensive and enthusiastic drama workshop, I was ready to work for the Wessons and gain new insights into what an honors program can offer its students, even at a small liberal arts college. I attended a workshop on undergraduate research, and I now plan to push for a program that offers research grants to goal-oriented honors students who wish to conduct research or produce arts-based projects outside of the Colby-Sawyer classroom. As a result of participating in the conference, Meghan Steele plans to spearhead the creation of a peer mentoring program for Wesson Honors first-year students, and Amanda Gibbons hopes to run bi-weekly political discussions over pizza between honors faculty and students, a program aptly named Professors, Politics, Papers, and Pizza. Professor Stecker plans to make a Wish List for the Honors Program and will attempt to attack the list one step at a time. These are just a few of the brilliant gems that our four-woman delegation was able to return home with from the conference.

Luckily, our time spent in Washington was not all business. We were able to take in the beauty and history of the global city by visiting the Jefferson Memorial, the Washington Monument, the White House, and the FDR Memorial (minus the finger-pulling). We also had the pleasure of seeing a group of singing political satirists called the Capitol Steps, enjoyed some fine-dining at the elegant Grand Hyatt Hotel, attended a glow-in-the-dark dance party, and we won some pretty fabulous and geeky t-shirts at the silent auction. All this and we still made it back to New London in time to go trick-or-treating!

**Nanosecond**

I received the following note from Jan and Bill Wesson, posted from Coral Cove, Barbados on 11/11/09. It is addressed specifically to the Honors Pathway: The Coming of Age Narrative, which they had visited on October 28th, but I think it might as easily be addressed to all scholars in the Wesson Honors Program, so I want to share it with each of you:

"Please forgive the lateness of this letter, but as you know, we left for Barbados a few days after we visited your class. We did not want to just dash off a few lines to you before leaving, as the time we spent with you meant a great deal to us.

It was wonderful to watch you all open up and become involved in the various topics that Ann Page brought up. We older people are apt to think that the younger generation is less diligent than ‘in our day.’ Not so with you. You are an inspiration, and we came away that day feeling very proud to be a small part of the Honors Program. Most of all we enjoyed being with you. Thank you for having us and making us feel so welcome.

We hope that you will be successful in your studies. Our very best to you, Jan and Bill."

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Editors

The past three and a half years have gone by so quickly. If only I had a little more time. The Honors Program provided me with so many opportunities and friendships here at Colby-Sawyer, I can’t imagine what it would have been like without it. As you prepare for winter break, I prepare to return home and search for a full-time job. I leave you with this: take advantage of every opportunity given to you here. You might regret not doing something. ~AF