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Fungal Fighter



Researcher Scott Costa has invented a "whey-based fungal micro-factory" technology that may save the eastern hemlock tree species from an exotic pest.
(Photo: Joshua Brown)

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Man in the Middle

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THE WEEK IN VIEW

February 1, 3:30 p.m.
Rosen Lecture: "Slavery, Torture, and Environmental Catastrophe: Constitutional Evils, Past Present, and Future," with Mark Graber, professor of government and politics, University of Maryland, John Dewey Lounge, Old Mill.

February 2, 7:30 p.m.
Lane Series Concert: Imani Winds. UVM Recital Hall. [Information,](#) [tickets.](#)

February 5, 4:30 p.m.
"Black Face(s) in Brown Mexico: Historical and Contemporary Issues," with Willi Coleman, associate professor of history, Fireplace Lounge, Living/Learning Center.

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By Joshua Brown

Article published January 30, 2007

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(Photo: Joshua Brown)

Reaching into a box glowing with fluorescent light, Stacie Grassano pulls out a tube. "This is a great one," she says, holding the clear plastic up to her face. Inside, a tree branch is speckled with white fluff. "It's growing really well," she says, handing it to Scott Costa.

Costa brings the branch close to his eye. "Yes," he says, with a boyish grin, "this is a fungus success story."

For some, a fungus success story means nothing is growing at the back of their refrigerator. But for Costa, research assistant professor of plant and soil science at the University of Vermont, and Grassano, his graduate student, the vigorous growth in their laboratory of this fungus, a strain called *Lecanicillium muscarium*, means a hopeful new chapter in the otherwise bleak tale of the eastern hemlock tree.

Battling an exotic pest

From Georgia to Maine, this once-mighty conifer is now succumbing to an exotic pest, hemlock woolly adelgid. First detected in the western United States in 1924, the adelgid caused little damage. But when it was carried east and reached Virginia in the 1950s it began its destructive spread. An aphid-like insect, the adelgid kills eastern hemlocks within a few years after infestation, feeding on the sap at the base of their needles and cutting off their nutrients.

While the adelgid, originally from Japan and China, appears to have no successful predators in North America, some native fungi — like the one Costa and Grassano have growing on branches in their laboratory — kill the pest.

Last December, Costa, Grassano, and two the other researchers, Vladimir



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Gouli and Jiancai Li, submitted a provisional patent for a new method of cheaply and effectively spreading the fungus, and other similar “biological controls,” that might beat back the adelgid without having to use expensive, toxic pesticides. They call their approach a “whey-based fungal micro-factory.”

Instead of growing fungi in a conventional factory and then transporting it out to a forest — a costly proposition — their factory will be the forest. Or, more accurately, tiny droplets of sweet whey — a cheap waste product of cheese production, inoculated with the right concentrations of the target fungus — will be their factory. By spraying the whey solution into an infected forest, they believe they can get the adelgid-killing fungi to reproduce in large numbers on its own.

“The sweet whey only costs 32 cents a pound,” says Costa, who gets his donated from a New York-based cheese company and receives support for his research from the US Department of Agriculture.

The whey is a far cheaper growing medium than those typically available in labs, and it serves as a nutritional resource, making each droplet a cozy biological factory for a fungal colony, pumping spores out into the forest long after the spraying teams have gone home.

Costa and Grassano’s experiments on branches taken from adelgid-infected forests in Massachusetts are proving highly successful, with rapid growth of the target fungi outcompeting other fungi that live on hemlocks. If their laboratory tests continue to go well, the researchers anticipate starting field trials in 2008. And beyond the adelgid, the researchers anticipate that micro-factories could be used with fungi that attack other insects, weeds and even plant diseases.

The economy and ease of the UVM team’s whey micro-factory technology may prove a critical consideration for land managers — especially in large areas with low economic value, like wild hemlock forests.

“We’re not going to eradicate the adelgid,” Costa says. “The best-case scenario for an insect-killing fungi is you inoculate the environment and get disease outbreaks to start cycling. The idea is to reduce the pest population to a level that is manageable, allowing some of the trees to make seeds, grow and survive.”

Time becoming crucial factor

It’s a pressing problem: In Shenandoah National Park most of the famous towering hemlocks are now dead. The adelgid has ravaged parts of Kentucky, North Carolina and the Smoky Mountains. Expanding northward, it has moved through Massachusetts into southern Maine and New Hampshire.

The only natural deterrent to the adelgid seems to be a very cold winter. With global warming, their northward spread seems inevitable. Though not officially recorded yet, “it’s probably in southern Vermont now at

population levels too low to easily detect,” say Costa, who anticipates that the adelgid will be into the Champlain Valley in not too many years, though whether it would soon reach the coldest parts of the Northeast Kingdom seems unlikely.

While the era of cutting hemlock for the tanning industry is over, there continues to be use of the tree for fiber and construction, and commercial forest owners have something to lose with the demise of the hemlock. But far more important, as the hemlocks expire they take an ecosystem down when they fall.

In cool hollows and along shady mountain streams the hemlock has grown for millennia where other trees wouldn’t thrive: a quiet giant soaring to over 150 feet. With a range from Alabama along the Appalachians into the Canadian Maritimes, its shaggy crown creates a blueish green haven unmistakable to turkeys and deer (and hunters): a thick understory of duff with a unique plant community, deep with shade that accentuates the black furrows of the hemlock’s tannin-rich bark.

In winter, chickadees eat the small seed cones of the hemlock and they are only one species of many that depend on the hemlock not just for food but for the architecture of their world. Some warblers only nest in hemlocks and mountain-spawning fish depend on the trees to keep streams cool.

“See all this white growth?” Costa says in his lab in Hills Building, tracing his finger above the soft flat needles. “That’s mycelium and likely as not there are spores at the end of each of those.” To the untrained eye, the fungus he and Grassano are growing looks much like the pest they hope it will fight. Hiding on the underside of hemlock branches, the pest produces a white woolly tuft that gives it its name. The fungus looks white and woolly too. But the subtle difference may mean life or death for the eastern hemlock.

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UVM HOMEPAGE

Man in the Middle

By Jon Reidel

Article published January 31, 2007



Chris Evans (R), assistant director for student media, and Austin Danforth III, managing editor of *The Vermont Cynic*, talk about upcoming issues of the student-run newspaper. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

Chris Evans, assistant director for student media, doesn't read *The Vermont Cynic* before it goes to press. That would seem unwise considering his job is to help improve the 125-year-old student-run newspaper. But from where Evans sits, which is somewhere between the students

at the paper and the administration that hired him, it seems a very wise choice.

Here's the daily dilemma. If Evans, hired in July 2006 by the Department of Student Life, interferes with content and layout prior to publication, student staffers – some of whom think Evans is an instrument of an administration that has no business meddling in the affairs of a student-run newspaper – would accuse him of influencing the final product. On the other hand, if an article runs that slams the administration or disparages the university, Evans, who says he's never received pressure from an administrator, is off the hook, so to speak, because you can't stop what you don't see.

As the first full-time person in the new position, Evans is left to traverse these untested waters on his own and figure out how to accomplish his primary directive to improve *The Cynic*, radio station WRUV and UVMtv. His basic strategy: educate the student journalists about sound editorial practices and let the presses roll.

Evans comes to his new role at UVM with an undergraduate degree in journalism from the University of Kansas, where he worked on the school newspaper, and a master's in fine arts from NYU. In addition to spending two years in the Peace Corps, Evans worked for the *Stockton Record*, *St. Joseph News-Press* and *Florida Today* as a reporter and news bureau chief. While in Florida, he also wrote a novel titled *God's Cellar* and worked as news advisor at Valencia Community College, where he was



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credited with turning around the school newspaper.

Finding the right balance

"There's been tension with students," says Evans. "But I'm huge about protecting students' First Amendment rights, and they know that. I see the paper when it hits the newsstand, which some weeks is a terrifying moment, but most week it's a great one. The institutions are very established here and have a long history of being student-run, so when I make suggestions they are only that. Students can choose to ignore them or tell me that they're insane or inane or whatever. Some suggestions stick and some don't, but if the rate of improvement stays even marginally the same, I can hardly imagine how great they are going to be in four or five years."

Like Evans, current members of *The Cynic* editorial staff acknowledge that the transition from very little oversight to having a full-time, experienced advisor has been a challenge. "There's been a lot of conflict since he arrived," says Chase Whiting, editor-in-chief. "Despite that, we really do respect him as a journalist and as an educator. He has a lot to offer and really has a lot of knowledge, especially about the mechanics of writing, and we look forward to working with him. We just don't want to compromise the integrity of a newspaper that has been student-run for 125 years."

Pat Brown, director of student life, says that anytime you hire someone in a student advisory role it's going to "take time to find common ground," adding that Evans faces a "double-layered challenge" in that he's new and is being asked to carry out a new institutional effort to help a student-run newspaper.

A new look

One of the most visible improvements since Evans arrival, aside from content, has been a redesign of the entire look of the newspaper. *Cynic* design editor Lily March played an integral role in the new and improved look. She took a layout course from Evans and attended a design conference in St. Louis with him, both of which she says were helpful. A new section called "The B-Side" allows for more editorial opinion-based content and serves as a clear divider from harder news in the front section. "There wasn't a real culture of attributing sources here, so there's been a lot of opinion mixed with news. When I look at the newspaper this semester, I see a whole new product with much stronger attribution," says Evans.

One of the ways Evans hopes to get his knowledge across without preaching it directly in the newsroom is through two new courses. With the help of Jane Kolodinsky, professor and department chair of Community Development and Applied Economics, and Lynn Gregory, assistant professor in CDAE, Evans started "College Media Internship," which is open to staff members of radio, television or newspaper and "Newswriting Across Media." Students can apply the information as they see fit when they head back to *The Cynic* or WRUV offices.

Looking ahead, Evans plans to spend more time at another long-standing UVM institution, WRUV radio, and the more recently developed UVMtv. He notes that all of UVM's media outlets have felt somewhat ignored in the bowels of Billings for many years and that the upcoming move to much nicer, more prominent offices in the new Dudley H. Davis Student Center will help alleviate that issue.

"I have to do a lot of listening and make suggestions when necessary," says Evans. "My biggest challenge is to pay attention to the ideas that stick and develop them. There have been some great improvements already, and I think as we figure things out it will only get better. I'm amazed at what they've done already."

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UVM HOMEPAGE

INTERview: Robert Corran

By Jon Reidel

Article published January 30, 2007



Athletic Director Robert Corran says the improvement of recreational fields and athletic facilities for both intramural and Division I sports plays a key role in the university's current 10-year vision. (Photo: Sally McCay)

improving facilities, building attendance at Catamount competitions, helping athletes excel in the classroom — and, of course, putting more games in the win column. With clear progress evident on many of those fronts, the view recently checked in again with Corran on the state of UVM athletics.

THE VIEW: You came here with a pretty defined vision for the future of athletics at the university. Now that some time has passed, how do you feel like that's coming along.

ROBERT CORRAN: I never like to think in terms that you've reached a goal, but rather that you've passed a milestone or created another opportunity, and in a lot of ways I think that's what's happened for us. We've been able to get some things done that have really enabled us to create more opportunities within the program. For example, getting the Victory Club running smoothly was very important. It was a completely new concept here that has been successful at other schools. We were still operating on several different independent sport-specific booster groups. It took some time for a different concept to take hold. Now that it has been accepted, it allowed so many more people to get involved in the program.

You made it very clear early on that facilities were a major factor to the future success of UVM athletics. Where do we stand in that department?

Shortly after becoming UVM's new athletic director in May 2003, Bob Corran sat down with the view to outline his vision for athletics at the university. His goals at the time were focused primarily on hiring new coaches (only three coaches remain that were here when Corran arrived),



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In our minds facilities are still a high priority. After working through a number of obstacles and issues, the one remaining issue that's growing larger and larger is facilities. As we kind of drill down into this thing we see that our facilities are really lacking. We have a track program without a track. In contrast, we now have the first turf field for field hockey and lacrosse, and we've already seen the difference that's made to the field hockey program, which has really exploded since we got that facility. It really demonstrates the impact that a facility can have. I'm not talking about a luxurious facility, but really high quality good competitive facilities that are functional and enable the athletes to train and compete at the highest level. When you look at Hockey East, we have one of the oldest and smallest arenas in the league. We have the oldest facility in America East for basketball. When you look at those facilities, it's clear that we've really hit a ceiling. We're at capacity in both of them, and the services we're able to provide are well below what people need and want. When you get down into the lower level of the building — locker rooms, showers and training rooms — all those support facilities are terrible. We have some teams that function without locker rooms, which at the Division I level is not at all appropriate.

How does a track coach recruit athletes without a track? Is that the next facility to come on-line?

The track is still a very high priority. It's ready to go. The permitting has been done, the design has been done, but what's holding us back is funding. It's an area where we haven't reached the threshold that we need to get the thing started. We've had a number of contacts with the track and field community to encourage them to really support this. We haven't had the success that we really need to get it started. Our hope is that we're going to be able to get this started in the spring, but we're not going to start the project until we've got the funding to do it. This is a facility that can get tremendous use from the entire campus community and beyond.

We've been pecking away at some things that we can take care of internally like the development of the varsity weight room. We were able to take existing space and, for a relatively small amount of money with some good planning and design work, create a first-class facility. We've been able to do some things like that, but there's a limit and we've reached it. This affects scholarship sports, but also recreation and intramurals. We're already overflowing in the fitness center. When you consider the number of students applying to the university, quality of campus life and recreation is a big part of their decision-making process. So it's not only important for us, but it's really an important part of the entire growth strategy for the university. When you look around at our peer institutions and their facilities, we are sadly lacking. We're kind of latecomers to the game.

You've hired a lot of coaches since you've been here. Do you feel like you've made good choices?

The people that you have to carry out the plans are always the most important thing in any kind of strategic development, and we've just got some really good people here both administratively and in coaching. They've done a wonderful job in moving us ahead and putting us in position for even more success. We've won the America East Academic Cup two years in a row now, and on both occasions it was with a record high grade point average. Academics really have been a focus when we've been hiring new people. We need and want people who are going to be committed to that. That's part of the benefit of hiring new people; you really can use that process to reinforce your values and build even more strength with the people you are bringing who are already committed to these values.

Given the record number of sellouts in men's hockey and frequent sellouts in basketball, is it time to build a larger facility? How many tickets do you think could be sold at games?

We've actually tried to project those very numbers on a regular basis. Granted, it's all projections based on phone calls, requests and all those things, but last year in hockey we really felt like we could have sold 6,000 tickets, and that's not including students. Two years ago in basketball we thought we could have sold similar kinds of numbers relative to the size of the facility, meaning we could have gone from 3,200 to around 4,500. So, we have confidence in being able to sell 6,000 to 6,500 seats for hockey and 4,500 to 5,000 in basketball. And that's given the facilities we currently have. One of the things that, I think, is sometimes overlooked is that new facilities with better services, better seating and all those things are going to bring in more people just by themselves. Based on all these factors, we think an arena in that 6,000-6,500 range is a pretty good place to be. I think building an arena is something that could happen with the right fundraising plan in place.

The hockey team's move from the ECAC conference to the powerful Hockey East has helped it on the national scene. What about other sports? Can men's basketball, for example, be expected to go to the next level as a member of the America East conference, which has never sent more than one team to the NCAA tournament?

There's a lot that's going to happen in terms of conference alignment in the Northeast in the next four or five years with much of it predicated on the Big East. Once the current agreement between the football and non-football teams ends, a lot of dominos will start falling depending on what the football schools decide to do. America East has really taken a proactive approach. We're at nine members now and have implemented a strategic plan to really elevate the competitive quality, the profile and reputation of the conference. That includes a number of standards that all schools have to meet in terms of number of scholarships, number of coaches, facilities, etc. Part of these standards include non-conference schedules. Teams have to play a certain number of schools ranked in the top 100 depending on the sport and a limited number of teams in the bottom half or third. The point is to push up the RPI (Ratings Percentage

Index) and those kinds of factors that lead to multiple NCAA tournament bids rather than just the automatic qualifier. The thinking is that if there is a lot of change, and people are looking to pick off schools, we don't want (the conference) to be the hunted, but rather the hunter. We want to be in a position where other schools will look at America East and see some real strengths and interests for them in becoming members.

Your son Andy (graduating in May with a double major in history and public communications) is a senior hockey player and has gone through the system here. What has it been like being the parent of a UVM student-athlete and how has the move here worked out for you and your family?

It challenges you professionally because you have to maintain that separation. He's loved it here. The university has been really good for him in terms of his interests and his personality. It's a good place for athletes and students. Like a lot of hockey players, he'd been away from home since high school playing junior hockey. He was so far away we never got to see him. It's really been enjoyable to be able to have him come by with his laundry every couple of weeks.

It really was a pleasant move. We just felt connected so quickly. When you have the physical surroundings that you do here and a job that's really rewarding professionally with good people, it's really fun to come to work every day. It really is a dream job. Philosophically it's the right place for me. I really do feel a consistency with my values and my perception regarding the place of collegiate athletics in the academic world with the university and what this place is about. I often say 'I wish I'd discovered Vermont years before.' But opportunities come along not on your schedule but someone else's.

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UVM Day at the Statehouse Continues for 10th Year

By The View Staff

Article published January 31, 2007

On Wednesday, Jan. 31 select students traveled to Montpelier to participate in the tenth annual UVM Day at the Statehouse, an event designed for students to learn more about Vermont state government and share their university experiences with state officials and legislators.

UVM's Vermont alumni and parent groups began the day by hosting a continental breakfast for legislators in the statehouse cafeteria. Later in the morning, students heard from the governor and lieutenant governor and attended a leadership forum keynoted by House Speaker Gaye Symington and then met with individual legislators and exchanged interests and ideas at lunch.

"UVM Day in the Statehouse is an excellent opportunity for students to find out the benefits and challenges of being state legislators," says Allyson Black-Foley, a member of the senior women's honor society TOWERR (The Organization of Women Exemplifying Reason and Responsibility), which organized the day's events.

Students are not the only participants in the day's events. President Fogel presented testimony to the House Appropriations Committee and to House and Senate Institutions Committees on the university's state appropriations requests.

"Students also have the opportunity to see the administration of the university working in an area that they otherwise would have never seen — educating lawmakers and advocating for the university on issues that will undoubtedly affect students," says Jason Williams, UVM alum and former participant in the event.

"On a personal note, it has helped me visualize opportunities that I may not have otherwise thought of," says Williams. "I am now a registered lobbyist for a large non-profit and am working very frequently in Montpelier — a place that is not so foreign given my experience with UVM Day at the Statehouse."

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Gray Mountains? Seminar Explores Vt's Demographic Challenge

By The View Staff

Article published January 25, 2007

Arthur Woolf, associate professor of economics, will discuss "Vermont's Ticking Time Bomb: The Economic and Fiscal Implications of Demographic Change," on Thursday, Feb. 8 at 7:30 p.m. in Memorial Lounge, Waterman Building. Woolf's talk is part of the Center for Research on Vermont's research-in-progress seminar series.

The former state economist and veteran professor will argue that the age structure of Vermont will change dramatically over the next 25 years. The state is aging much more rapidly than the nation, and over that time, the number of people over the age of 65 will double. Within the next five years, the number of people between the ages of 21 and 64 will begin to decline, and that decline will continue for the next twenty years. The number of school-age children, which has been falling for the past decade, will continue to fall for the next ten years before stabilizing. These changes are unprecedented in the state's modern history.

As businesses and other employers encounter this increasing scarcity of workers and expanding numbers of senior citizens, they will face serious challenges. Woolf wonders how they will adapt. State and local governments will also face a new set of problems as they will find it increasingly difficult to meet demands for government services with a tax base that will grow much more slowly than in the past. The seminar will explore the demographic causes and fiscal impacts of these changes and suggest ways that the private and public sectors can meet these challenges.

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Green Mountain Supervisor to speak on Future of Forests

By view staff

Article published January 29, 2007

Meg Mitchell, forest supervisor for the Green Mountain and Finger Lakes National Forests, will speak on Thursday, Feb. 1 at 12:30 p.m. on the first floor of Aiken as part of the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources' Spring Seminar Series: Conservation in the 21st Century.

On Dec. 1, 2006, the New England Wilderness Act, which establishes about 42,000 acres of new wilderness areas and a new National Recreation Area within the Green Mountain National Forest, became law and is expected to have a major impact on the area. The Forest Service is engaging people in the implementation process of the new 2006 Forest Plan for the Green Mountain National Forest, which will include these new area designations.

Mitchell's lecture will focus on the future of forests in the state and nationally.

Information: 656-3095.

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[Man in the Middle](#)

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UVM HOMEPAGE

EnvironMENTAL Art Lecture Series Kicks Off at Firehouse Center

By view staff

Article published January 31, 2007

Burlington City Arts and UVM Continuing Education are co-sponsoring a free public lecture series, "EnvironMENTAL: Earth-Minded Art," starting Thursday, Feb. 1 at 7 p.m. at the Firehouse Center for the Visual Arts and continuing every other Thursday through April 19.

The series features five artists and art educators who will talk about their personal experience in the environmental art movement and the role of art in such issues as global warming, natural disasters, famine and disease. Held in conjunction with a UVM studio seminar course taught by UVM art lecturer Cameron Davis at the Firehouse Center, the lecture series is part of the 25th Anniversary celebration of Burlington City Arts, which is dedicated to the promotion of excellence, experimentation, and education in all forms of contemporary art.

"EnvironMENTAL: Earth-Minded Art," starts Feb. 1 with local architect John Anderson's "Drawing Space: Integrating Art and Architecture," lecture, which focuses on the challenges of producing work for public spaces like the Burlington International Airport. Future lectures include "Seasons and Cycles of the Sun," with Kate Pond on Feb. 15; "Community and the Being of Human" with Jackie Brookner on March 1; "Greening Film and Visual Studies with Adrian Ivakhiv on March 29; and "Public Art: Transportation Solutions," with Nancy Dwyer on April 19.

Information: 865-7166.



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UVM HOMEPAGE

Burack Lecture, Conference to Examine White Privilege

By The View Staff

Article published January 31, 2007

Paula Rothenberg, director of the New Jersey Project on Inclusive Scholarship, Curriculum, and Teaching, will deliver the semester's first Burack President's Distinguished Lecture Series on Monday, Feb. 5 at 8:30 a.m. at the Sheraton Hotel and Conference Center in South Burlington, Vt.

Rothenberg, author of widely used tests in feminist and multicultural studies including *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism*, will speak on "Whiteness as a Discourse of Power in Education." Her lecture will look critically at the argument that a colorblind approach to race is best, arguing that this approach only further reinforces white privilege.

A daylong conference on this topic will follow the lecture. Those interested in attending the conference can pre-register by calling 656-3166.



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NOTABLES

January 31, 2007

Publications and Presentations

Dr. **Julia Johnson**, professor, vice chair of gynecology and director of the division of reproductive endocrinology and infertility, and a panel of expert clinicians and researchers provided input to the FDA on modifying guidelines on studies prior to and following approval of new hormonal contraceptives, as well as on how to effectively label these medications at a January 23-24 meeting. Johnson helps guide the FDA's decisions regarding oral and non-oral hormonal contraceptive drug products as a member of the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Advisory Committee on Reproductive Health.

Dr. **Clifford Singer**, associate professor of psychiatry, published a paper titled "University of Vermont Update in Dementia and Neuropsychiatry" in the January 2007 issue of *Expert Review of Neurotherapeutics*.

Class of 2006 College of Medicine alumnus Dr. **Philip Chan** and Dr. **Terry Rabinowitz**, associate professor of psychiatry, co-authored a paper titled "A cross-sectional analysis of video games and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder symptoms in adolescents" in the October 2006 issue of *Annals of General Psychiatry*.

Dr. **Mary Cushman**, associate professor of medicine, is a co-presenter of a poster presentation titled "Racial and Geographic Differences in Prevalence, Awareness, Treatment, and Control of Dyslipidemia: The REasons for Geographic And Racial Differences in Stroke (REGARDS) Study" that will be featured at the American Stroke Association International Stroke Conference 2007 on Feb. 7 in San Francisco, Calif. Dr. **Mark Gorman**, associate professor of neurology, is a co-presenter of a poster presentation titled "CT P20 Insulin Resistance Intervention after Stroke (IRIS) Trial," also on Feb. 7.

January 24, 2007

Publications and Presentations

Linda Berlin, extension instructor in the Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences, spoke at the National Press Club in Washington on Jan. 22 as part of a diverse new alliance of groups calling for bold changes in the 2007 Farm Bill. Berlin, representing the Society for Nutrition Education, is focused on securing legislation that will improve nutrition and reduce hunger through programs that would make food from local farms