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## Exploring the Explorers



Ron Savitt's investigation of the management of Arctic expeditions has taken him in unexpected directions. *(Photo: Rose McNulty)*

Ron Savitt's passionate probe of Antarctic expeditions is reinvigorating his thoughts about some of the oldest and most essential questions in business.

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## Eighth Grade

**Academy** If students are looking a lot younger to you lately, it's not just that widening G-gap. A large group of middle-school students from Boston, are on campus this week, dissecting every aspect of college life.

## Learning to Stay

Learning how to learn, understanding cognitive development, improving test taking and mastering such skills as citation styles for term papers are at the heart of Psych 15.

## Miracle Worker

Laura Siegel is adjusting. To college, to the frigid Vermont winter and to the limelight.

## THE WEEK IN VIEW

**Feb. 20, 4 p.m.**  
Talk: "Virginia Hasn't Always Been for Lovers," by author Phyl Newbeck. Black History Month event. Information: 656-8833.

**Feb. 21, 7:30 p.m.**  
Film: *Yo Soy Cuba*. An "epic poem to Communist kitsch," this Soviet film portrays decadence and poverty of pre-revolution Havana. 427 Waterman.

**Feb. 22, 8 a.m.**  
Trustees Meeting: Committee of the Whole. Memorial Lounge, Waterman.

**Feb. 22, 12 p.m.**  
Lecture: "What Causes Cancer?" by Dr. Douglas Weed, National Cancer Institute. 400 Health Science Research Facility.

**Feb. 22, 12:10 p.m.**  
Interim President Edwin Colodny discusses the state of the university on *Across the Fence*. WCAX television.

**Feb. 25, 4 p.m.**  
Talk: "Reconstructing the Past through the Study of Human Remains," by Deborah Blom, Archeology. 105 Marsh Life Sciences.

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**Engineering Week Builds Big Following**

Engineering Week drew hundreds of Vermont students to campus on Feb. 14 to compete in events ranging from the edible car to the ever-popular pasta bridge (UVM undergraduate Eric Browning is shown above assessing a carbohydrate construction).

Mt. Abraham High School dominated the contests, winning the pasta bridge and the Rube Goldberg, and placing second in the bottle rocket. Other winners included: Harwood Union Middle School (edible car), Champlain Valley Union High School (bottle rocket) and Burlington High School (egg drop).

In a separate event, Essex Middle School won the MATHCOUNTS competition on Feb. 16. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

**Study Examines New Treatment for Early Parkinson's**

Scientists in the College of Medicine are hoping that a new treatment for Parkinson's disease will prove effective in the long-term with fewer complications than the current approach. UVM is participating in a nationwide clinical study that focuses on patients diagnosed with early Parkinson's disease. Current treatments, though effective, have produced complications after three to seven years of use.

Approximately 1.5 million Americans have Parkinson's disease, characterized by tremors, muscle rigidity, slow movement, poor balance and a shuffling gait. These symptoms are the result of a loss of brain cells that produce dopamine, a chemical produced in the midbrain that helps control movement. "Approximately 1,500 people in Vermont suffer from Parkinson's disease and roughly 400 of these patients are treated here at the Movement Disorders Clinic," said Dr. Robert Hamill, chair of neurology. Hamill is the lead investigator for the UVM study, which is expected

**"Monologues" Drew Major Audience**

Student-led performances of Eve Ensler's play "The Vagina Monologues" drew 2,100 people to three sold-out shows last week, raising between \$10,000 and \$14,000 for local and international women's groups.

"It was a very powerful fundraiser," says Stephanie Morgan, program coordinator at the Women's Center and a key organizer of the performances.

A final dollar figure isn't yet available, but money from the play will benefit the Burlington Women's Rape Crisis Center and Women Helping Battered Women. One percent of the proceeds will go to RAWA, a women's rights group in Afghanistan.

But Morgan says the performances were much more than just a way to raise money.

"Being involved with the play is a profound experience," she says. "The monologues are so poignant and powerful – they take you from very deep moments to absolute laughing hysteria. Whether you're acting, organizing or just watching, the play involves you in a whole that's much larger than yourself. I found that a real sisterhood developed between the cast and the organizers. We developed a very deep and personal bond."

Morgan is already looking forward to next year's staging of the monologues. She hopes the event's explosive growth will continue – last year's small-scale V-Day performances, which were also sold out, reached an audience of only 600. If you missed the play and don't want to wait a year, Morgan and the Women's Center still have some unsold V-Day merchandise. To check out the T-shirts and travel mugs, call Morgan at 656-7892 or drop by the Women's Center at 34 S. Williams.

For background about V-Day and UVM, see [this article](#) from last week's issue of *the view*.

**In the Limelight**

In addition to numerous local and regional interviews, reviews and quotes involving UVM faculty and administrators, media outlets shone their national spotlights on several top UVM stories last month, including:

- *The Boston Globe* – an interview with Daniel Fogel following his appointment as UVM's 25th president. See [UVM Leader](#)
- *The New York Times* – Dr. Alan Budney,

to last up to four years, in order to track the treatment over time.

The greatest breakthrough in the treatment of Parkinson's disease was the development in the 1960s of Levodopa or L-DOPA, a drug that converts to dopamine in the brain. Another class of medications, known as dopamine agonists, binds to and stimulates dopamine receptors in the brain, thus helping to facilitate movement. The treatment under examination in the new study will use a new drug, as yet unapproved by the FDA. It will target a longer dopamine receptor, which scientists believe may be the key to ensuring longer-term benefits with less risk of the motor fluctuations patients can experience with Levodopa.

Participants in the study must be over the age of 30, have had Parkinson's disease for fewer than seven years and either have not taken or will agree to stop taking Levodopa.

Information: Gale Weld, neurology, at 800-417-8839 or 802-656-7717.

### **Put that Shot Away**

Sophomore track and field athlete Kristal Kostiew, of Northwood, N.H., won individual America East titles last week in the shot put (a quarter inch shy of 45 feet) and the 20-pound weight (at 52 feet and 4 inches) for a total of five America East titles in three championship meets.

Men's track and field captain Jeff Guilmette, of East Montpelier, Vt., won his fourth indoor shot put title and seventh conference shot put title overall. With knee surgery next on his schedule, Guilmette modified his technique to protect the injured leg, managing a final heave-ho just a quarter inch short of 54 feet.

associate professor of psychiatry and director of UVM's Treatment Research Center, discussed his research on marijuana users in the Health and Fitness section of the Jan. 29 edition. Budney's photograph was included in the article, which debated the addictiveness of marijuana. Read the abstract at: [Budney Abstract](#)

- *The New York Times* – Russell Tracy, professor of pathology and biochemistry, was quoted in a Jan. 22 article describing the connection between inflammation and chronic disease. Scientists believe that inflammation, the body's defensive response to infection or disease, may have a role in chronic disease. Read the abstract at: [Tracy Abstract](#)
- *Associated Press National Wire* – News of the Vermont Math Initiative (VMI), directed by Ken Gross professor of mathematics, was re-released on the Associated Press national wire in January after running on the AP New England wire in November 2001. The story was published Jan. 6 in the *Los Angeles Times*, *Miami Herald*, *Cape Cod Times* and *The Times and Democrat* (Orangeburg, SC), as well as in newspapers in New Jersey, Ohio and Pennsylvania. VMI is a statewide program that helps elementary school teachers develop math skills and new teaching approaches.

### **Trustees, Fogel Set Contract Terms**

UVM trustees and president-designate Daniel Fogel recently agreed to the terms of his contract, which include a \$260,000 salary, effective July 1. Fogel and his wife, Rachel, also elected to purchase their own home rather than live in Englesby House, the official presidential residence. The contract includes \$1,800 monthly for their housing allowance. Englesby will remain an official campus residence, to be used for more than 100 events annually.

Trustee Chair Bruce Lisman said Fogel's salary is close to the median and average salaries for presidents of comparable national research universities. Fogel's current salary at Louisiana State University is \$203,000.

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**"Landscape of Loss" Exhibit Continues**

In December of 1995, Jeff Gusky, M.D., a Texas emergency physician and photographer, visited southeastern Poland in pursuit of a deeper personal understanding of his Jewish faith. What he found transformed him. He returned to Poland again and again, always in winter, attempting to capture the essence of the centuries-old Jewish culture through black-and-white photographs.

His body of work now consists of 12,000 negatives. A haunting exhibit of his images is now on exhibit at the Fleming Museum. The show runs through Jun. 9.

*(The image of a broken stained-glass window above a synagogue front door in Wielkie Oczy, Poland is copyright Jeff Gusky.)*

**Author to Lecture on Mid-East Conflict, Terrorism**

Mitchell Bard, foreign policy analyst and executive Director of the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, will lecture on "Islam, Terrorism and the Arab-Israeli Conflict" Feb. 20, 8 p.m., in the Campus Center Theatre, Billings. Bard will sign copies of his co-authored book, *Myths And Facts: A Concise Record of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, following the lecture.

UVM Hillel and Vermont-Israel Student Alliance are sponsors of the event.

Information: Janel Alania, Hillel Program director, 656-1145.

**Welcome Visiting Students**

The Admissions Office expects 150 students – admitted through the university's early application program – to visit campus Feb. 22. Many of the students will be accompanied by family members, bringing the total number of visitors to about 400.

The event is an opportunity for the UVM community to welcome students who have confirmed plans to join the UVM Class of 2006 next fall and to offer other admitted students a final look at the UVM community before they commit themselves to a "match."

Look for these visitors in dining halls and classrooms and on tours throughout campus and bid them welcome.

**Talk to Illuminate an 'Extraordinary Memoir'**

Kari Winter, associate professor of English, will give a lecture titled "The Extraordinary 1810 Memoir of Jeffrey Brace" on Feb. 26 at 3:30 p.m. in the Special Collections reading room, Bailey/Howe Library.

Born in West Africa, Brace was captured by English slave traders in 1758 and was brought to Connecticut where he was held in slavery until 1777, when he enlisted in the Revolutionary Army. After receiving an honorable discharge, he moved to southwestern Vermont in 1784. Brace and his wife bought land in Poultney around 1795 and farmed there until a racist neighbor drove them to St. Albans, where their descendants still live. In 1810, Brace published his memoir, *The Blind African Slave*. Special Collections has a copy of the book, which is extremely rare.

Winter will discuss her research into Brace's life and preparations for publishing the first edition of the book since 1810. Winter has been studying African-American slave narratives for the last 15 years.

To reserve a spot at the talk, call 656-2138.

**Emergency Medicine Focus of Stowe Conference**

UVM, in cooperation with the American College of Emergency Physicians, is sponsoring a conference on "New Advances in the Management of Common Emergency Department Problems," Feb. 27 - March 1, at the Stoweflake Resort in Stowe.

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Feb. 20-Feb. 26

### Publications and Presentations

**Kathleen Liang**, associate professor of community development and applied economics, presented an article, "Our Dreams Shall Come True: The Impact of Optimism in New Venture Creation On Entrepreneurs and Their Families" at the National Small Business Institute Directors' Association Conference, in San Diego, California, Feb. 8-10. Liang also conducted a symposium at the conference, "Service Learning and Teaching Entrepreneurship To Youth Groups: Exploring Different Approaches and Comparative Experiences."

### Awards and Honors

**Rachel Johnson**, professor of nutrition and food sciences and acting dean of CALS, has been appointed by the Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration to the FDA Food Advisory Committee. The group advises the FDA on all issues related to food safety, food science, and applied nutrition.

**Kathleen Liang**, associate professor of community development and applied economics, has been invited to join the *the Journal of Sustainable Agriculture's* editorial board.

The **Center on Disability and Community Inclusion, the College of Education and Social Services** and the **Graduate College** recently received a four-year competitive grant award from the U.S. Department of Education totaling \$800,000. The grant will help educators prepare to serve students who pose behavioral challenges in Vermont schools by providing tuition support for graduate students, stipends for graduate assistants, funding for innovative coursework and support for on-site supervision at selected schools throughout Vermont. **Ruth Hamilton, Linda Backus and Julie Welkowitz** designed and will implement the program.

### Conferences and Media

**Bruce Duncan**, co-coordinator of the office of conflict resolution in the Center for Health & Wellbeing, will participate in the "Third International Delegation Leader Conference" in Prague, Czech Republic.

**Larry McCrorey**, retired University of Vermont dean and founding member of the Vermont Human Rights Commission, will appear on Feb. 25 at 7:30 p.m. on the Vermont Public Television program *Profile*.

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## Exploring the Explorers

### Ron Savitt's passionate probe of Antarctic expeditions is reinvigorating his thoughts about some of the oldest and most essential questions in business.

By Kevin Foley



Ron Savitt's investigation of the management of Arctic expeditions has taken him in unexpected directions. (Photo: Rose McNulty)

In the end – after the years of study, fundraising and staffing – in the end there were only the men, the dogs and the ice.

Early 20th century Antarctic explorers made intricate preparations, building complex organizations and logistical chains, but when this work was complete they flung themselves headlong into the void, dragging heavy sledges in minus-

60-degree weather for 18 months or more in pursuit of knowledge and glory, often at the price of their lives.

Ron Savitt, John L. Beckley Professor of American Business, grew up reading stories of the great Danish explorer Peter Freuchen with his father, and the romance of the "heroic period" of pre-World War I Arctic exploration never left him. Time has only intensified that interest.

"Contemporary America," he says, "has a short supply of real heroes."

And business professors, at times, have a scant supply of case studies that capture their students' imaginations and let them confront important problems unclouded by prejudices and received wisdom. So it was almost inevitable when, during a class six years ago, Savitt started discussing the managerial skills of explorer Charles Shackleton. The exchange that followed, somewhat to Savitt's surprise, flourished, and, over the next several years, the economist and retailing historian found his intellectual interests moving inexorably southward.

#### Knowledge about knowledge

Savitt doesn't gloss over the romance of the polar expeditions, the stirring human triumphs and tragedies of human beings confronting their limitations under the worst possible conditions.

But what really interests him about the trips, the thing that has moved him to compile 37 single-spaced pages of notes describing different configurations of polar sledges and to work as visiting scholar at Cambridge's Scott Polar Research Center, is knowledge. How do leaders and managers assimilate vast amounts of imperfect information? How does theoretical knowledge ("explicit" knowledge in Savitt speak) interact with knowledge about how to really do things ("tacit" knowledge)? What happens when explicitly knowledgeable managers find themselves in an expedition that, well, depends on actually knowing how to do things? What management structures promote the flow of knowledge, and what kind of organizations choke it off?

#### [Eighth Grade Academy](#)

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#### [Learning to Stay](#)

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"Robert Scott wrote extensively about the history of sledging, yet he had no idea of how to actually connect dogs to a sledge," Savitt says. "Part of what this is about is how some people under some conditions understand the need for and are able to capture tacit knowledge. This kind of knowledge is elusive, but it seems to be a very important factor in the success of expeditions."

As an example, Savitt cites the generally disastrous British expeditions, which operate on models derived from the military. There were officers, and there were men, and officers often had little interest in the niggling details that can tip the balance between success and failure – or in tapping knowledge of the men who had mastered the small stuff. The men worked for, not with, their bosses. Experimentation was discouraged, and results were sometimes tragic.

Scandinavian and Scottish expeditions grew out of a more egalitarian model, that of the scientific team. These tended to work better, in part because scientists are so devoted to acquiring and disseminating knowledge. "It's not just attention to detail. It was discipline and a *desire* – not just a willingness – to pursue what other people know," Savitt says.

### **Is leadership overrated?**

Get Savitt started about the expeditions and words and examples sift down as copiously as Arctic snow. His enthusiasm is infectious, in part because it is so intense and the subject is so novel, but also because Savitt's thoughts about the subject that is consuming him are still being formed.

A simple question about whether the great explorers were in essence great managers or great leaders, inspires a long and absorbing exposition that ends, "My thoughts on that are still coming. I hit a roadblock on that very question last weekend, and I may think something different next week."

But even in the absence of firm conclusions, Savitt's painstaking research into the details of organizing and executing polar ventures has led him to a rather narrow view of leadership.

"There are a million books and consultants describing leadership, but it remains elusive," he says. "I tend toward a heroic definition – leadership comes from adversity. It's in how you react. Circumstances forced Charles Shackleton to become a leader in a way that no one would have forecast."

But in Antarctica, raw leadership was perhaps overrated. Polar leaders could avoid much of the need for Savitt-style leadership if they could *manage*. In other words, develop clear goals, strong funding and comprehensive plans that tapped useful information about past trips without falling under the spell of wrong-headed conventional wisdom. Polar managers also had to build organizations where individuals had all the necessary skills, and where information could flow freely.

"If I were to go on an Antarctic expedition, I'd want a great manager – someone gifted in organization and logistics – not a great leader," Savitt says. "Who would you want to spend 18 months with at 60 below? I would want someone who knows how things work and who can make things work better."

### **"A burst of energy"**

Savitt's quest to nail down how the polar expeditions worked, both for better and for worse, has dropped him headlong into mounds of historical data. He is now, to name just one esoteric example, an expert in ice morphology. Mention of the name "Roald Amundsen" is enough to inspire his pole-weary wife and daughter to flee. His consulting clients might get a condensed history of polar expedition as part of the rationale for Savitt's recommendation that they include shop workers in strategic planning meetings.

Even months spent buried in the polar archive has only spurred his interest.

"I've had this burst of energy," Savitt says. But unlocking the details of how the polar expeditions worked and didn't work on their icy stage has captured his imagination. Within all that crucial minutia, he's finding new ways to approach questions about organizations and the diffusion of knowledge that have informed his work for decades. The subject has sparked a surge of articles and lectures, and he is beginning to shop a book proposal.

But for now, at least, the inquiry – and the positive response of his colleagues, students and clients – is its own reward.

"This is the first experience I've had where the question, 'Is what I'm doing important?' hasn't run through my head continuously," he says.

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## Apprentices Seek College Knowledge

By Lee Griffin



Citizens on the March: Students from Boston's Citizen Schools' Eighth Grade Academy toured the campus this week, attended classes and gathered information on getting into and staying in college.  
(Photo: Sally McCay)

If students are looking a lot younger to you lately, it's not just that widening G-gap. A large group of middle-school students from Boston, average age 13, are on campus this week, dissecting every aspect of UVM and college life.

The 46 youngsters, part of a group of 63 "apprentices" in the Citizen Schools' Eighth Grade Academy, toured the campus with an only-the-young energy, all the while streaming questions and conversations and

soaking up information. They're bright, they're irrepressible, and, thanks to this program, they're likely to be college-bound in four years.

### Upstanding citizens

Citizen Schools came to UVM's attention as the brainchild of two 1983 alumni, Eric Schwarz and Ned Rimer, who worked with community professionals to shape after-school enrichment programs for Boston area high school students. (See *Vermont Quarterly's* article, [Solid Citizens](#) for more on the program.)

Their latest thrust focuses on eighth-graders because, as Associate Dean of Education Rosalind Andreas explains, that is the "transition year to high school, when a lot of students are lost." The College of Education and Social Services, in connection with its Middle Level Education Program, and several other groups on campus organized the students' three-day visit.

The 8th Grade Academy focuses on improving the students' writing, speaking and reading skills by pairing them with lawyers, with whom they meet and work at least four hours a month. Many of the students also have investigated professions through Citizen Schools' internships – with architects, Web designers, dancers and surgeons, among others.

But the visit to UVM was their first opportunity to figure out the bridge – between middle school and college, between childhood and adulthood. Their questions, on Feb. 19, to a panel of UVM students – several of them from Christopher Columbus High School in the Bronx – revealed both fears and enthusiasm about the crossing. Would they be "punished" if they fell asleep in class? Would they be "kicked out for getting bad grades"? How many classes could they miss and what would happen when they did? Would the college students rather party or study?

### Questions from the academy

And, a question they perhaps wanted to ask but couldn't, came instead from Riccardo Johnson, head of UVM's TRiO program (see related article this issue: "Learning to Stay"): "What is it like being a woman and/or person of color on this campus?"

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Leniece Flowers, a political science major from the Bronx, answered: "I felt embraced by UVM. UVM welcomes diversity. It doesn't have much, but it welcomes it." Others added that people from the campus and the local community are friendly and helpful and that Burlington, rather than isolating them, has made them feel safe and focused on academic performance.

What the apprentices heard seemed to sink in. In recapping the session at the request of their director, John Werner, they mentioned the lessons that stuck:

Ben: "You can hang with people you want to hang with." Cliff: "Time management and organization!" Mark: "You're responsible for what you have to do to graduate." Randall: "Get help from tutors in the Learning Co-op." The session ended with Andreas leading the group in a Go Cats Go! cheer in preparation for their attendance that night at the women's b-ball game against Binghamton. (The Cats won 75-57.)

For more information, see [Citizen Schools](#).

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## Learning to Stay

By Jeff Wakefield



An analytical mind: First-year student Emil Lopez says Project Stay has helped him learn how he learns best, unlocking his full potential as a student. (Photo: Sally McCay)

It's the kind of news every college student wants to hear, and the students in Psychology 15 are no exception. The average time it takes to learn something new, according to Fran Kahn, learning skills coordinator in Academic Support Programs, is a mere 25 minutes – provided students can achieve a state of alert relaxation and are active, questioning readers.

To get more bang for their study-time buck, students delve into a set of relaxation exercises led by Kahn, a recent guest instructor in the class, then discuss the differences between passive and active reading.

### Staying power

Learning how to learn, understanding cognitive development, improving test taking and mastering such skills as citation styles for term papers are at the heart of Psych 15 – Improving Memory, Motivation and Cognitive Skills. It's one of the most popular courses in UVM's Project Stay program, a federally funded initiative targeted to students who have limited income, are the first in their families to attend college and/or are disabled.

The program is designed to serve as a proactive safeguard for these students, helping increase their chances of succeeding in college. It has impressive results among the 800 or so UVM students currently registered with the program, according to Richard Johnson, director of TRiO, the umbrella program that includes Project Stay.

"We're at around 90 percent retention for first-year students and 80 percent for students as a whole," he says.

In addition to Psychology 15, which Johnson teaches, Project Stay offers three other courses – Written Expression, Introduction to Poetry and Race and Culture, with a math course to be added next year. The classes are as rigorous as traditional UVM courses but are smaller to promote student-teacher interaction.

The program also offers a range of support services, from subject area and study skills tutoring to mentoring to financial aid workshops. It also lends laptop computers to students who need them.

"The program has helped me a lot," says Emil Lopez, a first-year student from Christopher Columbus High School in the Bronx. Lopez received tutoring in writing while taking the Written Expression course last fall and found it beneficial. In a recent Psych 15 class, he determined that he is an analytical learner after answering a series of questions designed to reveal his learning style. "That means I like to think through theories and analyze them. I'm not

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so much a hands-on person; I learn by listening."

### **On to Graduate School**

Project Stay emphasizes success in both the undergraduate and graduate realms, and UVM's program recently added a component that facilitates the transition to postgraduate study.

"The graduate program is still in its infancy, but it's developing quite well," says Johnson. Last year, he and his staff helped place four Project Stay students in graduate programs: two at St. Michael's College, one at Georgetown and one at Boston University. Last fall, the program organized an informational trip to graduate schools in Boston. Four students visited with faculty and department chairs in their areas of interest at Northeastern, Boston University and Boston College. A second trip is planned for the spring. Project Stay also offers a GRE prep course through Continuing Education.

In addition to Project Stay, UVM administers one other TRiO program, Upward Bound, which provides support, counseling and enrichment to motivated, college-bound high school students from limited income families and/or whose parents did not attend college. See the view article: [Upward Bound](#). TRiO counts some impressive names among its graduates, including Oprah Winfrey, astronaut Franklin Chang-Diaz and talk show host Beatrice Berry. UVM's own Wanda Heading-Grant, director of the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity, and Johnson himself also are TRiO grads.

"I've been involved for so many years," Johnson says, "it's really my life's work."

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### **TRiO Day**

Project STAY/TRiO and Upward Bound/TRiO will hold a celebration for students, staff, faculty and the community on Feb. 28, 2-5 p.m., in Memorial Lounge, Waterman. U.S. Rep. Bernie Sanders will be the guest speaker.

Information: 656-7753.

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## Reaching Out

***The Miracle Worker* strives to stay true to Helen Keller's story and spirit**

By Lynda Majarian



First-year student Laura Siegel (left), is Helen Keller in *The Miracle Worker*, and junior Cristi Andrews plays Annie Sullivan. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

Laura Siegel is adjusting. To college (she's a first-year student planning on an English major), to the frigid Vermont winter (she moved from Florida last fall) and to the limelight (she's playing the lead in UVM Theater's production of *The Miracle Worker*.)

That last adjustment, perhaps, is the hardest. Siegel, who is playing Helen Keller, has never acted publicly before. She is also deaf.

"At first, I wasn't even sure if I could act," Siegel says. "I always wanted to get involved with the drama club in high school, but it was hard for me due to not having an interpreter at meetings, and not knowing when or what was I supposed to do."

Landing the role, she says, came as a shock. But not an unwelcome one. Siegel says her experience acting in the play, which depicts the intense relationship between Keller and her teacher Annie Sullivan, so far has been "truly phenomenal."

### Spirit and solutions

Guest director Dede Corvinus has also found working on the play moving, in large part because of the indomitable spirit of its heroine. "Helen Keller was incredibly intelligent and curious," she says. "She is to me – and I believe to many Americans – the epitome of the human spirit."

Corvinus's goal as a director is to keep Keller's challenges in sharp focus, making them immediately accessible to audience members with and without full powers of hearing and sight. A variety of additional programming coupled with the play (see "More on *The Miracle Worker*", below), will illuminate its themes from different angles. The goal of accessibility also influenced how the play was staged and cast, which presented some challenges to Corvinus and her cast.

"We had to rethink some methods of working that most actors and directors take for granted," Corvinus says. For instance, cueing Siegel's lines. She can't hear oral cues, and because she is playing a blind person, she can't appear to respond to visual cues. Eventually, creative solutions were found – but we won't give away backstage secrets.

Another unique element of this production is that each character, except Keller, will be played simultaneously by two actors – one speaking and one using American Sign Language.

### Exploring the Explorers

Ron Savitt's passionate probe of Antarctic expeditions is reinvigorating his thoughts about some of the oldest and most essential questions in business.

### Eighth Grade Academy

If students are looking a lot younger to you lately, it's not just that widening G-gap. A large group of middle-school students from Boston, are on campus this week, dissecting every aspect of college life.

### Learning to Stay

Learning how to learn, understanding cognitive development, improving test taking and mastering such skills as citation styles for term papers are at the heart of Psych 15.

"The signing actors serve as a constant reminder to the hearing and sighted audience that their world is different than Helen's," Corvinus says.

And, of course, the signing actors will help hearing-impaired members of the audience enjoy the play more fully. In addition, accommodations have been made for people with visual impairments, who will have the opportunity to experience scenery and costumes with a touch-tour of the stage before the curtain rises on Friday, March 8. That evening, a specially trained narrator will describe the onstage action through small earpieces provided by Very Special Arts Vermont and UVM's ACCESS office.

Performances of *The Miracle Worker* will run Feb. 27-28, March 1-2 and 7-9 at 7:30 p.m. and March 10 at 2 p.m. in Royall Tyler Theatre. Tickets range from \$9 to \$12.50.

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#### **More on *The Miracle Worker***

- A photo exhibit chronicling Keller's life, provided by the American Foundation for the Blind, Helen Keller Archives, will be complemented by a display of artwork created by deaf and blind Vermonters provided by Very Special Arts Vermont. This exhibit is designed for people of all abilities. Both the photos and the Vermont art are on display Feb. 27 - March 31 on performance nights and 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. weekdays in the Royall Tyler Theatre lobby.
- Panel discussion on sociopolitical issues faced by contemporary women with disabilities in the 21st Century. Friday, March 8, 6 p.m., Craftsbury Room, Royall Tyler Theatre.
- Members of the production company will lead a discussion about their experiences incorporating American Sign Language into the play. Sunday, March 10, approximately 4:30 p.m., room 210, Royall Tyler Theatre.
- For information on tickets or events, call 656-2094 or visit [UVM Theatre](#).

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