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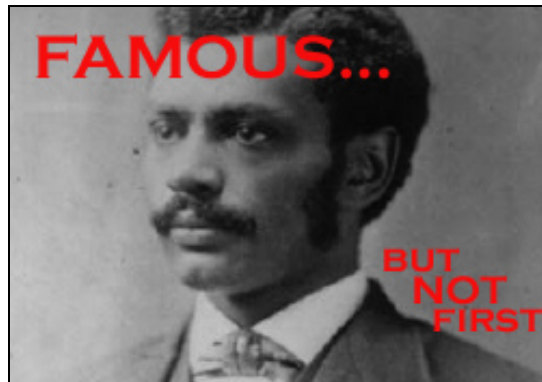
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Breaking News from 1838

FAMOUS...



**BUT
NOT
FIRST**

George Washington Henderson was long thought to be UVM's first black graduate. Then a tip to a librarian yielded a surprise – Andrew Harris had come almost 40 years earlier. (Don't fret for Henderson's place in history: He was the first African American ever elected to Phi Beta Kappa.)

Old idols die hard. George Washington Henderson, Class of 1877, has long been revered as the university's first African American graduate. With that distinction comes the props of a pioneer – the portrait in Waterman's Memorial Lounge, the nod in litanyes of UVM pride. To be sure, Henderson is worthy of celebration. Worthy, but just not first.

[FULL STORY ►](#)

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Gymnastics

Championship Placed in a situation where many would quit, members of the women's gymnastics club – a varsity team just two years ago – instead chose to excel.

Realizing Rural

Dreams Fred Schmidt sits quietly as residents of Johnson talk about ways of improving their community. The founder of the Center for Rural Studies takes it all in as he devises ways of helping the people of this northern Vermont community meet their collective goals.

THE WEEK IN VIEW

April 8, 4 p.m. Harry H. Kahn Memorial Lecture: "The Necessity of Poetry after Auschwitz," with Jack Zipes of the University of Minnesota. Memorial Lounge, Waterman. Information: 656-3430

April 8, 6 p.m. Lecture: "Market-Based Solutions to Environmental Problems," with Jonathan Lash of the World Resources Institute. 101 Fleming. Information: 656-3177

April 13, 6 p.m. Community Medical School: "Losing Sight: Defining the Process of Macular Degeneration," with Dr. David Weissgold, UVM/Fletcher Allen ophthalmologist. Carpenter Auditorium, Given. Registration: 847-2886

April 14, 12:15 p.m. Lecture: "The Proverbial World of Pieter Bruegel the Elder and Pieter Brueghel the Younger," Wolfgang Mieder, professor of German and Russian. Marble Court, Fleming Museum. Information: 656-0750

April 14, 12:30 p.m. Lecture: "The New Power Struggle in Russia: Making Sense of the Khodorkovsky Affair", with Robert Daniels, professor emeritus of history. John Dewey Lounge, Old Mill. Information: 656-1096.

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The 28th annual Vermont Latin Day, held in Patrick Gym on April 2, proved once again that a language does not have to be living to be lively. Hundreds of students from schools throughout Vermont packed their togas and attended the event for skits, songs and skills tests. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

Staff Council Asks for a Bigger Wage Boost

Staff Council will ask for salary increases for non-union staff equivalent to those for most of the university's unionized employees to offset anticipated increases in benefit costs and other work-related expenses.

The decision to request that the administration include in its fiscal year 2005 budget proposal an across the board staff salary increase of 5.7 percent with an additional 2 percent to be used for merit, compression and equity was reached at the council's April 6 meeting.

The administration's budget recommendations to be presented at the May 21-22 meeting of the board of trustees call for 4 percent raises for non-unionized staff. The budget proposal also includes a 5.7 percent salary increase for United Academics members, an amount negotiated last year that is part of a three-year collective bargaining agreement.

Staff Council members cited proposed changes in health insurance and in parking costs as the primary reasons for the request, saying the 4 percent boost isn't enough to offset the increases, especially for employees who don't earn a "Vermont Livable Wage," a range defined by the State of Vermont's Joint Fiscal Office as beginning at \$23,889 for a single person and increasing based on family status.

Trustees will have the final say on the budget,

New Statewide Diabetes Network Aims to Improve Care

For people with diabetes, controlling blood sugar, cholesterol and blood pressure is critical to staying healthy. When these goals go unmet, dire consequences can result. Following the same chronic care model as recently presented by Vermont Governor Jim Douglas, a new UVM research project intends to provide measurable proof – via blood test results – that Vermont's more than 28,000 diabetes patients and their physicians can achieve improved diabetes control.

The new Vermont Diabetes Information System project electronically links participating hospital laboratories, primary care providers and their diabetic patients. Funded by a \$2 million grant from the National Institutes of Health, the VDIS now has statewide participation, with 10 hospital-based laboratories and 37 primary care practices with 102 providers across the state and in upstate New York and New Hampshire.

The system's process is simple. Each time an enrolled patient has a diabetes-specific lab test, VDIS generates a report for the physician that contains other pertinent lab information and guideline-based prompts regarding treatment targets. If the lab result is out of range, or if a patient is overdue for a test, the physician and patient are automatically sent a reminder via fax or letter. This "decision support" helps everyone involved focus on setting and meeting goals. Physicians also receive periodic report cards to show how well their practice is meeting targets.

Dr. Charles MacLean, UVM associate professor of medicine, is the VDIS project director. MacLean, a practicing primary care physician, has enrolled primary care practices statewide, from the Northeast Kingdom all the way down to Bennington, and in neighboring New Hampshire and New York.

"By facilitating a partnership between physicians and patients with a system of goal-setting, outcomes will improve," MacLean says. "In addition, we expect VDIS will also function as a helpful tool for busy primary care physicians, and provide cost-savings for the overall health care system."

HERS Institute Invites Applications from UVM Women

The HERS Management Institute for Women in Higher Education at Wellesley College is accepting applications for the 2004-2005 academic year. It is an integrated series of five seminars, which focus on planning and fiscal management,

which is subject to change any time prior to the final vote in May.

UVM Cyclists Win Major Race

The club cycling team is riding high this week. The squad just returned home after winning top honors in Division I of the April 3-4 Boston Beanpot Classic, the nation's largest regular season collegiate bicycle race. The UVM team competed with squads from Boston College, Cornell, Penn State and Harvard but the real battle of the weekend was waged against Dartmouth College.

UVM beat Dartmouth, the Division 2 winner, during the Men's A ten-mile road race on Saturday. UVM riders Keith Jennings and Kevin Bouchard-Hall went up against Dartmouth contenders Tim Clement and the nearly undefeated Michael Barton. While expected winners Bouchard-Hall and Barton duked it out road-side, Jennings pulled ahead at the last minute for a dramatic and unexpected win.

The team also came out on top for the weekend as a whole. While the team lost Sunday morning's road race to UNH, the Catamounts gathered a race-leading 987 points. Penn State came in second with 630 points, and Dartmouth third at 585 points.

The team next competes April 17-18 in Burlington and Charlotte and will then ride in the Eastern championships in New Hampshire.

"The fact that we won gives us great confidence going into these next big events and puts us into the position of top dog. This will make it a little harder since all the teams will be gunning against us but I think our team is plenty good enough for the task," says Bouchard-Hall.

managing in organizations and professional development. The program is open to women faculty and professional staff at UVM. Tuition, materials and room and board are paid for by the university.

HERS gives women the chance to get away from their regular work at intervals throughout the year to gain perspectives about higher education from their peers. The HERS faculty is composed of administration and faculty members from a host of institutions including Brown, MIT, Boston College, and the University of Massachusetts among others. The program differs from other management institutes in its focus on higher education and its emphasis on enhancing opportunities for women.

Mara Saule, dean of libraries, has attended HERS and serves as a faculty member with the HERS Institute. "The HERS experience expands the horizons of women in higher education," she says. "It gives a deeper understanding of the various cultures of the academy to help navigate our current roles, and provides insight into new opportunities to position us strongly for the future."

Recent participants in the HERS program will share information about the selection process and the overall experience in three upcoming information meetings:

- April 8, 11:45 a.m. in 107 Rowell
- April 15, 12:00 p.m. in the Fleming Museum Activity Room (Rm. 104)
- April 27, 12:00 p.m. in 427A Waterman

Information: 656-2484

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Nobel laureate Jody Williams '72 in action at a 2001 mine-treaty press conference in Nicaragua. (Photo: Philippe Revelli)

Alumna and Nobelist to Lecture on April 13

Jody Williams '72, a leader within the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and winner of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize, will speak on April 13 at 4 p.m. in Billings North Lounge. The title of her Mark L. Rosen Memorial Lecture is "Landmines and the Common Good." A reception will follow the free, public speech.

Since February 1998, Williams has written, taught and served as a campaign ambassador for the ICBL, speaking on the organization's behalf all over the world. She is also a member of the group's coordination committee, which carries out the ICBL's strategies and action plans. She also serves as senior editor for its 1000-page annual *Landmine Monitor Report*, which monitors the implementation and compliance of the Mine Ban Treaty.

Williams is also one of ten Nobel winners to work with Peacejam, which describes itself as "an international education program built around leading Nobel Peace Laureates who work personally with youth to pass on the spirit, skills, and wisdom they embody."

She was honored by the Nobel committee for her work as the founding coordinator of the ICBL, which was formally launched by six non-governmental organizations in October of 1992. In that capacity, Williams oversaw the growth of the ICBL to more than 1,300 NGOs in over eighty-five countries and served as the chief strategist and spokesperson for the campaign. Working in an unprecedented cooperative effort with governments, UN bodies and the International Committee of the Red Cross, the ICBL achieved its goal of an international treaty banning

A Month of Celebration and Study for Campus LGBTQA Community

The university's LGBTQA services office, along with several campus and community organizations, will host a month-long exploration of issues of special interest to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and questioning community members and their allies. The roster of performances, films, exhibits and special events includes:

- April 7, 7 p.m. Queering the *Lord of the Rings*, dinner and discussion with Valerie Rohy, assistant professor of English, Chris Vaccaro, lecturer of English and student Christopher Kaufman. Allen House. RSVP: 656-8637
- April 7, 9 p.m. Comedian Mimi Gonzalez, Billings North Lounge.
- April 10, 7 p.m. "On the Move: The 6th Annual Queer Community Dinner to Benefit R.U.1.2? Community Center," benefit dinner. Wyndham Hotel. Tickets \$35. RSVP to UVM table: 656-8637
- April 12, 8 p.m. "B4T (Before Testosterone)," solo performance with Imani Henry. Billings North Lounge. Kate Bornstein, author of *Gender Outlaw*, writes: "The best of the as-yet untold tales of the queer underground still belong to the FTMs; and the most exciting of these tales are being told in Imani Henry's B4T..."
- April 14, 6 p.m. "Take Back the Night," rally against sexual violence. UVM Green.
- April 15, 12 p.m. Book group discussion of *Aimee and Jaguar* UVM Women's Center. (Copies of the book are available for loan.)
- April 15, 7 p.m. "The Times of Harvey Milk," film screening. Billings Campus Center Theater.
- April 15, 9 p.m. "Kinsey Sicks," performance and comedy with "America's favorite dragapella beautyshop quartet." Ira Allen Chapel.
- April 16, 12:15 p.m. "Art and Mirrors for Our Communities: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists," with Joanna Kadi, a teacher, writer and activist. Kadi will also speak and perform on April 19 and 20. John Dewey Lounge, Old Mill.
- April 17, 8 p.m. Gregory Douglass in concert. Christie Wright Patterson.
- April 21, all day. "Day of Silence," a student-led day of action asking individuals to take a vow of silence to protest anti-LGBT bias in schools.
- April 21, 12 p.m. "Silent Luncheon for Staff and Faculty." See above for details. Cook Commons, Billings. RSVP: 656-8637
- April 22, 9 p.m. Champion slam poet

antipersonnel landmines during the diplomatic conference held in Oslo in September 1997.

Prior to beginning the ICBL, Williams worked for eleven years to build public awareness about U.S. policy toward Central America. From 1986 to 1992, she developed and directed humanitarian relief projects as the deputy director of the Los Angeles-based Medical Aid for El Salvador. From 1984 to 1986, she was co-coordinator of the Nicaragua-Honduras Education Project, leading fact-finding delegations to the region. Previously, she taught ESL in Mexico, the United Kingdom and Washington, D.C. She is a graduate of UVM, the School for International Training and Johns Hopkins University.

Williams was invited to campus by Distinguished Visiting Professor of Political Science Madeleine Kunin, a former Vermont governor.

The Mark L. Rosen Memorial Lecture Series brings a noted speaker in political science to campus each year. It was established by the family and friends of Mark L. Rosen '63. Rosen was a leading authority on insurance litigation and served on several committees of the New York State and City Bar Associations, as well as the American Bar Association.

Information: 656-3050

Writer's Union President to Speak

Gerard Colby, president of the National Writer's Union, will speak on April 13 at 7 p.m. in Memorial Lounge, Waterman. The title of his speech is, "The Inside Scoop on the Fight Against Media Monopolies."

Colby is the author of *DuPont: Behind the Nylon Curtain*, *Dupont Dynasty* and *Thy Will Be Done*. He was also the lead contributor to *Into the Buzzsaw: Leading Journalists Expose the Myth of Free Press*, which received the National Press Club Award for Press Criticism and the New York Public Library Award for 25 Best Books of the Year. The longtime union activist and publishing expert's talk will touch on the Patriot Act and censorship in addition to monopoly issues.

Information: 658-9667

Buddy Wakefield. Billings North Lounge.

- April 28, TBA. "The Real Real World: Students Respond to MTV's 'Real World'", panel with UVM students discussing their LGBTQA experiences at UVM. Billings North Lounge.
- May 6, 4 p.m. LGBTQA Awards and Rainbow Graduation Ceremony Celebration. Billings North Lounge. RSVP: 656-8637

This is just a partial listing of LGBTQA events in April and early May. For more information, including updates and a complete calendar of events, go to [The UVM LGBTQA Services Office](#) or call Dot Brauer at 656-8637.

Lecture Asks, 'Is Affirmative Action Still Needed?'

Forty years after the passage of the Civil Rights Act, Barbara Bergman asks: "Is Affirmative Action Still Needed?" She will explore the topic in a President's Distinguished Lecture Series presentation on April 8 at 3:30 p.m. in Billings North Lounge.

"Many people consider affirmative action unfair and feel their interests are hurt by it," Bergman says. "Like painful surgery, affirmative action can be legitimately advocated only as a means of improving an intolerable situation. But...do such situations still exist?"

A professor emerita of economics at the University of Maryland and American University in Washington, D.C., Bergman's research covers a broad range of economic and social policy issues. She is the author of several books on sex roles in the economy and labor economics, including *America's Child Care Problem: The Way Out* and *The Economic Emergence of Women*. In the 1980s, Bergman also wrote a monthly column on economic affairs for the *New York Times* Sunday Business section.

Bergman is past president of the Eastern Economic Association, the Society for Advancement of Socio-Economics, the American Association of University Professors and the International Association for Feminist Economics. She served as a senior staff member of the President's Council of Economic Advisers during the Kennedy Administration and as senior economic adviser for the Agency of International Development.

Information: 656-3064

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Awards and Honors

Zuzana Srostlik, a sophomore in physics, has been selected as a Barry M. Goldwater scholar. Srostlik earned the honor through a nation-wide competition and is the only Goldwater scholar in Vermont this year. The award carries up to \$7500 a year in scholarship funding.

Matthew Wilson, research assistant professor of business administration, was recently awarded a grant from the UVM Global Outreach Committee to fund research and travel in mainland China. The objective of this grant is to assist graduate student training, travel and participation in a forthcoming international collaboration project in China from May 22 to June 6. The visit is being jointly sponsored by United States National Science Foundation International directorate, the Chinese National Science Foundation and the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Publications and Presentations

Math doctoral candidate **Natalie Cartwright** and **Kurt Oughstun**, professor of electrical and computer engineering, recently published the article "Pulse Centroid Velocity of the Poynting Vector" in the March issue of the *Journal of the Optical Society of America*. This paper addresses, in part, the current controversy regarding superluminal optical pulse propagation in a dispersive channel.

Kathleen Manning, associate professor of integrated professional studies, gave several presentations at this year's National Association of Student Personnel Administrations National Conference and the American College Personnel Association. Her presentations concerned research-based models for student affairs practice, analysis of student engagement and professional literature in her field. Manning also recently co-edited a book, *Research in the College Context: Approaches and Methods* (Banner-Routledge).

Physics faculty gave many presentations in the Annual American Physical Society Meeting recently held in Montreal. **Dennis Clougherty**, associate professor, co-authored two presentations, with details of one to be published in *Physical Review Letters*. **Sanjeeva Murthy**, associate professor, co-authored two presentations and chaired one meeting section. **David Smith**, professor emeritus, co-authored two presentations. **Randall Headrick**, assistant professor, co-authored five presentations. Some presentations by Clougherty and Headrick included work from undergraduates.

Rick Vanden Bergh, assistant professor of business administration, had an article accepted for publication in the *Journal of Law and Economics*. The paper, "The Political Economy of State Level Administrative Procedure Acts," will be published in October.

Dr. **Richard Wasserman**, professor of pediatrics, co-authored an article in the March 10 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* titled "Management and outcomes of care of fever in early infancy."

Nancy Zimny, associate professor of physical therapy, published an article, "Diagnostic Classification and Orthopedic Physical Therapy Practice: What We Can Learn from Medicine," in the March issue of the *Journal of Orthopedic and Sports Physical Therapy*. Due to the importance and timeliness of the topic, the journal's editor published the article along with three invited commentaries and Zimny's response.

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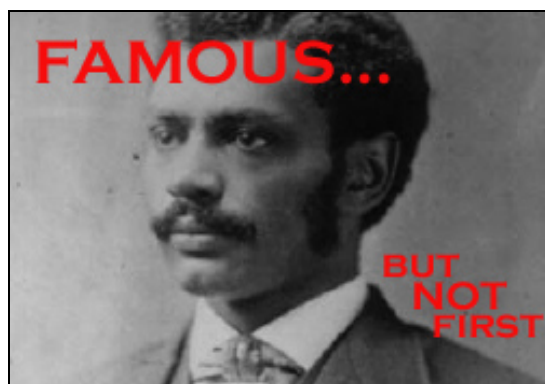
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Breaking News from 1838

By Tom Weaver



George Washington Henderson was long thought to be UVM's first black graduate. Then a tip to a librarian yielded a surprise – Andrew Harris had come almost 40 years earlier. (Don't fret for Henderson's place in history: He was the first African American ever elected to Phi Beta Kappa.)

Old idols die hard. George Washington Henderson, Class of 1877, has long been revered as the University of Vermont's first African American graduate. With that distinction comes the props of a pioneer – the portrait in Waterman's Memorial Lounge, the nod in litanies of UVM pride. To be sure, Henderson is worthy of celebration. Born a slave, he worked his way through school by teaching in Jericho, Vt. and went on to a career as a minister, professor, and higher education leader.

Gymnastics Championship

Placed in a situation where many would quit, members of the women's gymnastics club – a varsity team just two years ago – instead chose to excel.

Realizing Rural Dreams

Fred Schmidt sits quietly as residents of Johnson talk about ways of improving their community. The founder of the Center for Rural Studies takes it all in as he devises ways of helping the people of this northern Vermont community meet their collective goals.

Worthy, but just not first.

As UVM nears its 200th commencement, it's time to set the historical record straight, says Jeff Marshall, university archivist. George Washington Henderson was nearly forty years too late for first; Andrew Harris, UVM Class of 1838, your time has finally come.

Revisionist history

Harris first came to Marshall's attention six years ago on a tip from Bob Buckeye, now retired as Middlebury College's archivist. While researching Martin Freeman, Middlebury's second African American alumnus, Buckeye came across a footnote reference in *The Black Abolitionist Papers, Volume III*, which stated that Andrew Harris "was refused admission to Union and Middlebury colleges because of his race and finally enrolled at the University of Vermont, where he graduated in 1838."

Marshall took up the hunt at UVM, where he found confirmation of Harris's matriculation in the yellowed pages of the *University of Vermont General Catalog 1791-1900*. Among the 24 members of the Class of 1838, Marshall hit archival pay dirt: "Andrew Harris, licensed by preb of Phila 40; d 1841; name not in catalogues of President's record, must have entered after October '37." Marshall notes that it wasn't unusual for students of the time to start late in the semester or spend a single year at the university before graduating, as Harris did.

And that's about where the trail of Andrew Harris's time in Burlington ends. Alumni files and contemporaneous sources such as letters and diaries yielded nothing for Marshall. The student yearbook was a thing of the future. The UVM Registrar's Office confirmed having Harris's record on file but didn't offer up a look, resolute in the duty of protecting his privacy even 157 years beyond the grave.

Meanwhile back in Middlebury, Marshall's archivist counterpart Bob Buckeye was faced with some questions of his own. Middlebury's alleged rejection was a

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bit perplexing for a school that had earlier accepted the fabled Alexander Twilight, who became the first African American college graduate in the United States in 1823. Addressing the speculation of some that Twilight actually passed as a white man at Middlebury, Buckeye casts doubt on that notion with the fact that he was regarded as black in his hometown. He also notes further evidence of Middlebury's progressive attitude on race in the college's first honorary degree, which was awarded to Lemuel Haynes, an African American minister, in 1804. Buckeye found no Middlebury policies restricting admission on the basis of race, and his attempts to track down the source of the footnote met dead-ends.

Resonance beyond Vermont

Harris's post-UVM biography is a good deal clearer. Though he would live just three years past his college graduation, Harris made a name for himself as a Philadelphia minister and abolitionist. On May 7, 1839, he was among the speakers at the annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, an event that drew a crowd of nearly 5,000 to the Broadway Tabernacle in New York City.

A sample of the heat Harris kindled from the pulpit: "Shall I again point to the South, and depict the sufferings of the slave? If the groans and sighs of the victims of slavery could be collected, and thrown out here in one volley, these walls would tremble, these pillars would be removed from their foundations, and we should find ourselves buried in the ruins of the edifice. If the blood of the innocent, which has been shed by slavery, could be poured out here, this audience might swim in it – or if they could not swim they would be drowned."

Marshall notes that Harris's ordination as a Presbyterian minister in April 1841, when he assumed the pastorate of Philadelphia's St. Mary's Street Church (also known as the Second African Church), put him in the powerful position of being a leader in the African American community and a religious leader able to command respect from white clergymen and their congregations. But Harris would be dead in less than a year, cutting short his potential at age 31.

Marshall first brought Andrew Harris's place in UVM history to light in an article for the Special Collections newsletter *Liber* in 1998, though it's been tough to re-write a nugget of institutional memory as firmly lodged as the name of George Washington Henderson.

But how to explain Harris's years of total obscurity?

"I think people simply forgot about him," Marshall says. "I don't know whether anyone thought it was an important question to ask before the 1960s. At any rate, when Professor Goodrich began compiling the alumni information for the General Catalogue in the 1880s, if there was anyone who remembered that a black student had been here briefly in the 1830s they probably didn't think it important."

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Women's Gymnastics Survives and Thrives

By Kevin Foley



Senior moment (left to right): Carie Blow, Erla Magnusson, Sarah Silverberg, Erika Pineles and Kara Tighe closed their careers with a national championship.

Placed in a situation where many would quit, members of the women's gymnastics club – a varsity team just two years ago – instead chose to excel. The team had already overcome their change in status long before the April 25-26 National Association of Intercollegiate Gymnastics Clubs Championships, the reconstituted squad's first national meet. But then, just before the big event, the club's best gymnast went down with an injury.

"We had looked at the scores from last year, and we thought we were pretty competitive. But we didn't really know; we hadn't gone against any of the top teams," says senior team captain Kara Thom. "Then our top all-arounder sprained her ankle and we thought we were finished."

They weren't. They were just beginning. Balance and a string of career-best performances propelled the team to a decisive national championship, defeating 40 other clubs including representatives of Penn State, the University of Virginia, Purdue and Texas.

Gary Bruening, the former varsity coach who now volunteers as the club's staff advisor, picks up the story after the injury: "That really let a lot of air out of our bags," he says. "But the women regrouped very quickly."

Rewarding moments

Gymnastic team competition is a test of breadth and depth more than individual excellence. The event scores that comprise a team's competition total are drawn from a team's top four finishes in each event. Losing a quarter of the expected top four, on top of drawing volunteer athletes from a relatively small school (second-place finisher Penn State has an enrollment of 35,000 to UVM's 7,800), stretched the team thin.

So the close-knit group, which had been squeezing in thrice-weekly workouts since September, rallied themselves with sign painting, wild cheering and a spate of hotel-hallway hijinks. As the athletic cliché goes, they decided to take their matching green-and-gold flip-flops (the club is big on spirit and matching apparel) and, well, step it up. The results? Nineteen personal bests in 32 scores. "Everybody did by far the best job they could possibly do," says Thom, who is studying business administration.

Bruening, as an observer and facilitator for the student-driven club, found the whole experience amazing. "It was one of the more rewarding moments of my collegiate athletic experience," he says. "We went out there with expectation that we would do the best that we could. After the first day of competition, we thought, maybe we can be top-five. By the end, when all the chalk dust had settled, we were on top. It was a momentous experience."


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Revisionist History

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Sarah Silverberg, a senior in the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources, describes the team's experience in its first national championship this way: "People were blown away by us. They were like, 'Vermont? Where did they come from?'"

Pursuing the passion

So where did they come from? From the remnants of the NCAA squad, which was cut in 2001 and last competed in 2002. From word-of-mouth that let enrolling first-years know that the club was a place gymnastics could be a hobby, a serious hobby, but one that left room for school, relationships and work. And even from sharp-eyed spotters at the Gut – one team member was recruited after she was spotted doing tell-tale toe-pointed crunches.

The UVM experience is not uncommon. Budget cuts and realignments nationwide have devastated men's and women's varsity gymnastics (there are less than 20 men's programs left nationwide; women's teams are fairing better, but are increasingly falling under the same pressure) and caused explosive growth in participation in the sport at the club level. Although a demanding, conditioning-heavy, year-round sport, many student gymnasts say they couldn't imagine giving up an activity that many have participated in since kindergarten.

"Gymnastics, for me, has been a refuge," says Silverberg. "You can have had the most horrible day that you could imagine, but when you start a workout, nothing else matters about that bad day, you just forget it, because gymnastics requires so much concentration and body focus."

While losing varsity status was devastating for many on the team, Bruening says that only a couple of athletes elected to transfer. "We tried to frame it that something has happened to us that has created a change, and change is natural, so we can either give up and blow away or maximize the variables presented to us," he says.

The team gathered closer around each other, deepening relationships and friendships – "When you're a club, you help each other, coach each other," says Thom – and after limited competition last year, decided to work toward the NGAIC event as a goal for this season.

"They took a negative and turned into a national championship, that's the real story here," Bruening says.

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Realizing Rural Dreams

By Jon Reidel



Associate Professor Fred Schmidt (right), co-director of UVM's Center for Rural Studies, talks with Chuck Ross after serving as facilitators during a meeting of community leaders in Johnson. (Photo: Jon Reidel)

armed with a comprehensive community profile packet compiled by UVM's Center for Rural Studies, which has helped towns across the state revitalize their communities by helping secure grants, conducting research, offering expert advice, facilitating meetings, and connecting residents with people in critical state and federal positions.

The topic at hand is public transportation. The options are limited in Johnson, especially since the Greyhound eliminated its route to Burlington due to low ridership. One man says he hasn't had a car for the last year and now understands the old Vermont adage "you can't get there from here." "We're supposed to be the transportation hub of the area, but this big wheel doesn't have any spokes," he says.

The group wonders aloud if its slightly high unemployment rate has something to do with the minimal transportation infrastructure in Johnson. Connections are made between transportation and the successes and failures of the town. Ideas start flowing. Seeds of hope are planted.

A resource at ready

Associate Professor Fred Schmidt, founder of the Center for Rural Studies and one of the state's leading community development experts, is on hand to observe and, later, offer his expertise. As a former board president of the Community Transportation Association of America, a national organization that represents several hundred rural and small city transportation systems, Schmidt brings first-hand experience to the table.

Schmidt is unassuming and could easily pass for a Johnson resident. Acutely aware that he's not, he respects this fact by saying very little during the 90-minute brainstorm. The time for Schmidt, who has studied rural communities across the globe for more than three decades, to carry out the rural development council's mission of "providing information necessary for rural people to exercise control over their individual and collective destiny," will come later.

"Fred knows several models of community profiling and envisioning," says VCRD Executive Director Paul Costello '78, G '72. "He's an old hand at this and is an invaluable resource to us and the rest of the state. He told me once that 'when

A dozen residents of Johnson are sitting on old wooden benches and chairs arranged in an oval inside an old town hall. They've taken time out of their workday on this cool March afternoon to talk about issues facing their northern Vermont community of 3,274.

Five community development experts from across the state invited by the Vermont Council on Rural Development are also in the room. Residents are

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Revisionist History

Old idols die hard. George Washington Henderson, Class of 1877, has long been revered as the university's first African American graduate. With that distinction comes the props of a pioneer – the portrait in Waterman's Memorial Lounge, the nod in litanies of UVM pride. To be sure, Henderson is worthy of celebration. Worthy, but just not first.

Gymnastics Championship

Placed in a situation where many would quit, members of the women's gymnastics club – a varsity team just two years ago – instead chose to excel.

you know one community in Vermont, you know one community in Vermont.' He's a touchstone for us."

Marshalling university resources

One month after the initial Community Visit, Costello will hold a town meeting where residents will identify key issues, narrowing them down to five via a vote. Costello will return a month later with leaders in the five identified areas, some from UVM, to help build plans to turn the goals into reality.

This process has resulted in positive changes in many Vermont communities including Richford, where improvements in health care, low-income housing, walking paths, schools and downtown buildings have been made. In Poultney, millions of new dollars in grant money was earned for a number of projects, including the restoration and transformation of the Stonebridge Inn into a municipal building and the construction of a Slate Discovery Center.

Costello says the university plays a key role in facilitating these town projects by offering research expertise and community profiles for free. "Our first connection with UVM is as a resource," Costello says. "We don't have a big budget so their help is crucial. A lot of people [with the community visits program] are UVM alums. We all have a great deal of patriotism for rural Vermont and UVM."

Also benefiting from the process are university students who often participate in the visits as part of their coursework. "It's one thing to hear about community development at 10,000 feet, but students are listening to this while sitting in the middle of it," Schmidt says.

Schmidt adds that he believes in making decisions about the present and future based on a "firm grasp of local demographics, an understanding of the natural resource base and resident human and social capital." Having seen the struggles of numerous communities over the years trying to improve themselves, Schmidt, equal parts encourager and realist, tells the Johnson residents that they have a lot of positives to work with, adding they also have a lot of work ahead.

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