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Sugar Technology Goes South



As more Honduran farmers adopt environmentally friendly techniques adapted from Vermont maple producers, a Community Development and Applied Economics researcher hopes sights like this one become less common. (Photo: Dan Baker)

Rising unsteadily over a dilapidated shack, the smokestack bleeds a plume of thick, dark smoke into the Honduran countryside. It's a disturbing image, evoking both hopeless poverty and environmental degradation. But to the man who took it, CDAE Lecturer Dan Baker, it's pure inspiration.

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[UVM Research Finds Promise in New Diabetes Drug](#)

A Wartime Life in

Letters Though Betty Bandel is usually remembered here as a productive scholar — she published many books on Shakespeare, Vermont history and New England — and an energetic and demanding teacher, she was also a senior Army officer during World War II. The story of a young WAC officer's everyday life during an epic conflict, once almost lost, is revealed in a new book.

Summer of

Opportunity Growing up in Buffalo, N.Y., Alexa Schmitt had a romanticized view of Vermont as a bucolic state with few social ills. That impression changed in June, just a few days into her summer internship with the Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger and the Winooski Summer Lunch Program.

Every Breath We

Take "When you think of air, you don't think of solids," says chemistry graduate student Brian LaFranchi. But the air we take in contains millions of solid particles, each about a hundredth of the width of a single human hair. These particles, in turn, are made up of thousands of chemical compounds that regulate global cooling and influence human health.

THE WEEK IN VIEW

July 22, 7 p.m.
Reading: *Nature, Culture and Big Old Trees*, with Kit Anderson, Environmental Program lecturer. Barnes & Noble, South Burlington.

July 23, 3:30 p.m.
Discussion: "Big Picture, Small Frame: Challenges in Environmental Journalism," with members of the Society of Environmental Journalists board. Waterman Manor, Waterman Building.

July 24, 10 a.m.
Event: "Fourth New England Polymer Workshop," with students, post-docs and faculty in the field. Cook Physical Science Building, RSVP required. Information: 656-0308

July 28, 7 p.m.
Event: "Poets for Peace," featuring UVM poet Major Jackson among others. Contois Auditorium, Burlington.

August 5, 7 p.m.
Talk: "Postcards from Vermont: A Social History," with Allen Davis, professor emeritus, Temple University. Information: 656-0750

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New Engineering Dean to Bring Innovative Teaching Model

The university has named Domenico Grasso dean of the College of Engineering and Mathematics after a yearlong national search. The search was led by Frances Carr, UVM's vice president for research and graduate studies. The appointment was announced July 6.

Grasso is currently the Rosemary Bradford Hewlett Professor and founding director of the pioneering Picker Engineering Program at Smith College in Northampton, Mass. Prior to that he was head of the Civil and Environmental Engineering department at the University of Connecticut.

Grasso will formally begin his duties at UVM in January 2005 but will be working closely with the university in the intervening period.

"We're very pleased to have attracted a scholar and innovator of Dr. Grasso's stature to lead the College of Engineering and Mathematics," said President Daniel Mark Fogel. "A thriving engineering program is critical to UVM's and Vermont's future. Dr. Grasso's wide ranging accomplishments make us confident we have the right person for the crucial period ahead."

"Dr. Grasso is a valuable addition to the University of Vermont," said Vermont Gov. Jim Douglas. "As we move forward, it is my hope that the College of Engineering and Mathematics will play an increasingly important role in Vermont's efforts to inspire growth in the technology sector. I am optimistic that, together, President Fogel's vision and Dr. Grasso's leadership will offer Vermont many of the tools that we need to recruit and retain national high-tech firms for the future."

"I'm very excited by the opportunity to lead a first-rate program with a rich history to even greater heights of excellence," said Grasso. "The College of Engineering and Mathematics is not only in a growth mode, but the university's faculty and leadership are also interested in thinking creatively about what it means to be an engineer in the 21st century. I'm excited to be part of a university that is building such strong forward momentum over a range of fronts."

A new era

According to Provost and Senior Vice President John Bramley, the appointment of Grasso marks the beginning of a new era of growth and investment in the College of Engineering and Mathematics.

Gutman, Massell, Moore Win Kroepsch-Maurice Awards

Three members of the faculty have received 2004-2005 Kroepsch-Maurice Excellence in Teaching Awards, the university's most prestigious award for classroom instruction.

They are:

- Huck Gutman, professor of English
- David Massell, assistant professor of history
- Matthew Moore, lecturer of political science

Each recipient of the honor will receive \$1000. Judges for the award consider excellence in instruction, an ability to animate and engage students, innovation in methods, commitment to cultural diversity and excellence in advising. For more information about the program, see [Kroepsch-Maurice Excellence in Teaching Awards](#).

the view will publish profiles of each award-winner during the upcoming academic year.

National Writing Project Concludes Ninth Successful Year at UVM

The National Writing Project in Vermont concluded its ninth annual summer institute at the University of Vermont last week, with 150 Vermont teachers preparing to become leaders in the effort to help students become successful writers and learners.

With a variety of programs at 185 sites, all on college campuses, the federally-funded National Writing Project serves about 100,000 teachers annually. UVM is the project's only site in Vermont.

"The summer institute is a good professional development model that works extremely well here," said Patricia McGonegal, who teaches in UVM's English department and is director of the National Writing Project in Vermont.

The English department provides personnel support; the President's Office lends financial support to the initiative. McGonegal and Geof Hewitt, a lecturer in English, taught at the institute this summer and Nancy Welch, associate professor of English, served as supervisor.

For nearly five weeks, teachers practiced informal and structured writing, made presentations about research practices and

The university has agreed to invest over \$1.5 million in base resources for the College of Engineering and Mathematics between fiscal years 2005 and 2007, Bramley said, and to add 15 tenure track faculty to the college by fiscal year 2009.

"Building the engineering program at UVM is critical to two important areas," he said. "We need robust research growth in the college to meet our institutional research goals. An active, strong program is also vital to creating new businesses and good jobs for Vermonters."

Bramley said he is particularly excited by Grasso's vision for creating engineering leaders, a competitive advantage the university could offer its students.

At the heart of Grasso's pioneering approach is the idea of combining the quantitative rigor associated with the engineering curriculum with study of the social sciences and humanities.

Placing students at the "vibrant intellectual crossroads of the sciences and humanities," Grasso said, "will not only produce skilled engineers but also give graduates the perspective, critical thinking ability, and vision to assume leadership roles in the profession and in society in general."

"That's a very exciting notion," said Bramley, "and a very good fit for UVM."

Bramley said one of the first tasks for Grasso will be in working with the college to identify its future emphases and to develop a staffing plan consistent with the university's vision and strategic plan.

"These positions represent key institutional investments," Bramley said. "We need to identify the college's areas of strengths — critical areas we want to strengthen — as well as activities that need change."

Bramley gave credit to current dean Robert Jenkins, who has led the college over the last five years. "During Bob Jenkins's tenure as dean, nearly all the performance metrics of the college improved. For instance, enrollments went up and research productivity increased. I thank him and the faculty for their leadership over a challenging period. Much of the growth and success that we will be seeing is based upon the solid foundation Dean Jenkins built."

A highly acclaimed model

Established in 1999, Smith's Picker Engineering Program has gained wide notice — with stories in the *New York Times*, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Boston Globe*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and many other national publications — for being the first engineering program at an American women's college, for its rigor, and for the importance it places on study of the humanities and social sciences. Grasso, who came to Smith in 2000, played the major role in shaping the program.

tackled the type of writing assignments they give their students. Each teacher also produced one piece of professional writing, such as a case study, and one position paper concerning an issue in education.

During the school year, the teachers will conduct project-sponsored programs in their own schools and in neighboring schools and districts. In Vermont, students and teachers write a regular column in the Burlington Free Press through its Young Writers Project, a yearlong monthly series aimed at improving writing — and the teaching of writing — in Vermont schools.

"The project exists to help us better understand the relationship between universities and K-12 education," says McGonegal, who also teaches at Mount Mansfield Union High School. "We are also teaching students to write before they get to college," she says, noting that first-year students' lack of writing expertise is an almost universal complaint among college professors throughout the country.

NSF Grant Will Support Students Studying Environmental Biology

The College of Arts and Sciences has been awarded a National Science Foundation grant aimed at enhancing educational opportunities in biology for undergraduates, especially among minority students. Administered by the NSF's Division of Biological Infrastructure, the Undergraduate Mentoring in Environmental Biology program funds innovative new programs that, through year-round research activities and sustained mentoring support, encourage students to pursue careers in environmental biology.

Lori Stevens, professor of biology, and Donna Rizzo, assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering, are the principal investigators of UVM's grant. Their winning proposal outlines a model for enriching science education that embraces many of the university's strategic goals, such as providing students with rigorous and challenging experiential learning, recruiting students from under-represented groups and developing interdisciplinary research and scholarship.

Over the next year, the university's admissions office will help recruit students through UVM's Urban Partnership Program. Included in these efforts will be students at Burlington High School—recently named a partnership school—and Missisquoi Valley Union High School, where many students are of Abenaki heritage. The eight high school seniors recruited to the four-year program will each be offered \$32,000 in scholarship funds. Once enrolled, they will follow a curriculum that includes training in problem-oriented computer modeling, statistics and population genetics; a semester colloquium devoted to developing peer-reviewed research proposals; and a summer field research project.

"We wanted to create something fun and innovative," Stevens said, noting that many facets of the UVM model were inspired by a model developed by the American Sociological

Grasso's model for the Smith program also caught the attention of business and engineering leaders nationwide. "What a great vision ... Dr. Domenico Grasso had in 2000 when the first students entered the program," said Vance Coffman, chairman and CEO of Lockheed Martin. William Wulf, president of the National Academy of Engineers, said that Grasso had "debunked the stereotype [of engineers]" and that the new Smith engineering graduates would "make the lives of everyone on the planet better."

Grasso is expected to bring the same creativity and sense of social purpose that marked the Smith program to the College of Engineering and Mathematics at UVM.

Grasso received a bachelor of science degree from Worcester Polytechnic Institute, a master of science degree from Purdue, and a Ph.D in environmental engineering from the University of Michigan. He has published extensively and has obtained federal, state, and industrial funding to support his research, which focuses primarily on the ways contaminants are transported through the environment, what happens to them, and how they may impact human health.

Grasso is vice chair of the United States Environmental Protection Agency Science Advisory Board and past president of the Association of Environmental Engineering and Science Professors. He also served as chair of a briefing to the U.S. Congress titled, "Genomes and Nanotechnology: The Future of Environmental Research."

Competition Calls for Cancer Research Abstracts

The Vermont Cancer Center invites UVM/FAHC students and fellows to submit applications for presenting their cancer research at VCC's 19th Annual Regional Cancer Research Symposium in October. Two winners will give 10-minute presentations and will receive complimentary registration and a \$150 cash award.

Abstracts from basic, translational, and clinical trainees are welcome through Aug. 20. Abstracts not chosen for platform presentation will be automatically entered in the symposium poster session.

For more information about the competition, contact Katherine Weaver at katherine.weaver@uvm.edu or 656-2176. For details about the symposium, visit www.vermontcancer.org/events

Association.

Students recruited for the new environmental biology program will begin classes in Fall 2005.

Alumnus Makes \$2.3 Million Gift to School of Business Administration

The School of Business Administration has received a \$2.3 million gift commitment from James and Judith Keller of Gig Harbor, Wash.

The Keller Family Fund for Honors Preparation in Finance will endow the school's Honors Seminar in Finance, with additional funding to enhance other aspects of the student experience in the School of Business Administration.

James Keller, Sr., graduated from the University of Vermont in 1972 with a degree in mechanical engineering and has been an executive with Weyerhaeuser Company for more than 30 years. His son, James Keller, Jr., graduated from UVM in 2003 and was a student in the [Honors Seminar in Finance](#) first offered in the spring of that year. Keller said he and his wife were impressed by the quality of the education their son received at UVM. "We wanted to be able to contribute to its future success with something that will make the student experience even richer," he said. He credited UVM for providing solid preparation for his own career.

The honors seminar draws on the experience of UVM alumni in the investment banking community to give students a rigorous immersion in the world of high finance. Students meet with the alumni at their respective banking institutions and are given a real-world investment decision to analyze. At the end of the semester they're put on the "hot seat" to defend their analyses and recommendations before the seasoned investment pros.

"We're humbled by the generosity of the Keller family and the commitment they've made to help us develop the next generation of business leaders," said Rocki-Lee DeWitt, dean of the school. "This gift will have a comprehensive, enduring effect. In addition to providing ongoing support for a unique honors experience that builds students' capabilities and confidence, we will be able to extend the benefits to a broader base of students who are interested in finance and investments by expanding summer internship opportunities and enhancing the activities undertaken by the student-led Finance and Investment Club."

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July Event Tackles Enviro Challenges, Marks Vermont's Selection to Host 2006 Journalism Conference

The University of Vermont and Vermont Law School will host some of the nation's leading environmental journalists October 25-29, 2006, when the annual Society of Environmental Journalists conference comes to Burlington. The conference is expected to draw more than 600 participants, including editors and reporters from top newspapers, radio, and television.

A public program featuring national journalists and Vermont environmental experts will be held July 23 at 3:30 p.m. to mark Vermont's conference award. The public is invited to attend the program, "Big Picture, Small Frame: Challenges in Environmental Journalism," at the Waterman Manor on the fifth floor of the Waterman Building.

"Big Picture, Small Frame" will examine how reporters and editors approach the complexities of environmental news. Panelists will discuss how to include the themes, patterns, and larger issues while covering stories that unfold in small events over time. They will also consider why values-based points of view such as "the precautionary principle" so often go missing from U.S. news reports on environmental issues in the public interest.

The panel presentation, co-sponsored by the Society of Environmental Journalists, UVM, and VLS, will feature media criticism and examples drawn from specific issues in the news. Speakers will include Mary Watzin, director of the UVM Rubenstein Ecosystem Science Center; Patrick Parenteau, director of the VLS Environmental and Natural Resources Law Clinic; and SEJ board members Dan Fagin of *Newsday*; Christy George, Oregon Public Broadcasting; Mark Neuzil, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, MN; and Tim Wheeler, *Baltimore Sun*.

SEJ is a membership organization of journalists and educators dedicated to improving environmental news reporting. SEJ was founded in 1990 and has more than 1,300 members.

As host institutions for the 2006 conference, UVM and VLS will provide the SEJ with program ideas, tour opportunities, educational resources, and support.

The 2006 conference, based at the Sheraton Hotel and Conference Center in South Burlington, will explore issues of national, international, and regional importance. Conference organizers are planning to make use of Vermont's wealth of

Royall Tyler Anniversary Features Simon, Shakespeare and Sophocles

The Department of Theatre is celebrating 30 years on the Royall Tyler Stage with an anniversary season featuring Sophocles, Shakespeare and Neil Simon. Subscription tickets are now on sale by mail and [on-line](#).

Descriptions and dates of 2004-2005 season performances:

"Antigone," an ancient Greek story, updated by Jean Anouilh and set in the 21st century, challenges the audience with timeless questions. What price would one pay to use one's voice? What is the ultimate cost of silence? The show is guest-directed by Mark Nash, artistic director of Vermont Stage Company, and features guest artist Esau Pritchett as Creon. "Antigone" runs Sept. 29 through Oct. 2 and October 7-10.

"Rumors," a contemporary farce and the first Neil Simon play presented by UVM Theatre, opens with the deputy mayor of New York City and his wife throwing an elegant dinner party. As the guests arrive, however, the food is uncooked, the host has attempted suicide and the hostess is missing. The upscale evening goes downhill from there as each arriving couple adds to the twists, turns and calamity. The show, directed by Sarah Carleton, will run Nov. 10-13 and 18-21.

Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" closes the season. The play is a complex and magical comedy involving two sets of couples whose romantic intentions are complicated by their entrance into the play's fairyland woods. The play will be directed by Peter Jack Tkatch, associate professor of theatre, and runs from March 2-5 and 10-13, 2005.

And, of course, the theatre will also present "The Toys Take Over Christmas" for the fourteenth consecutive season. The show is Dec. 4-5. Single tickets for the play go on sale in October.

Subscription prices for all performances are now \$40 adult and \$30 for UVM affiliates and senior citizens. Single tickets will go on Sept. 7 when the theatre's box office opens. To purchase subscriptions, get more information, or join the mailing list visit uvmtheatre.org or call 656-2094.

Lecturer to Host Book Signing and Reading at Barnes & Noble

Kit Anderson, a member of the Environmental Program faculty, will host a book signing and reading at Barnes & Noble in South Burlington at

environmental know-how and environmentally significant landscapes. A trip to the Northeast Kingdom, for example, may introduce journalists to the challenges facing northern forests, while Lake Champlain may illustrate aquatic ecology and water rights concerns. Cross border, field-study trips to neighboring Quebec and the Adirondacks are also under consideration.

SEJ Executive Director Beth Parke comments, "We're very excited to be able to bring SEJ's annual conference to Vermont in 2006 to explore the region's world-renowned reputation for environmental leadership and stewardship. It's a great opportunity for SEJ to be able to work with UVM and VLS as partners and co-hosts in this effort. We recognize and appreciate the remarkable strengths of both UVM and VLS. "

The SEJ conference is a major event, held in a different part of the country every year. Attendees include representatives from major media, freelancers, and a growing international contingent. The conference is a valuable opportunity for host cities and states to show off their environmental expertise while focusing on regional stories and issues.

Visiting journalists will spend up to five days in the region. Previous conference hosts include UCLA, the University of Arizona, Michigan State University, Duke University, and the University of Maryland.

7 p.m. on July 22 to promote her new book, *Nature, Culture and Big Old Trees*.

The book, based on dissertation research, explores the relationship between people and trees in Louisiana and Guatemala. Anderson, a cultural geographer and ethnobotanist who specializes in nature-society relationships, describes the role of big old trees in different landscapes and cultures, using examples of live oaks in Louisiana and ceiba trees (also known as kapok) in Guatemala.

Anderson, former editor-in-chief of *National Gardening* magazine, says the book is an attempt to show how big old trees, and the places they help to create, become deeply meaningful, even sacred, to human beings.

Alumnus to Bring Hockey's Stanley Cup to Burlington

Former University of Vermont standout Martin St. Louis '97, the MVP of the National Hockey League this year, will bring the Stanley Cup to the Sheraton Burlington Hotel on July 29 from 8:30 to 11:00 a.m. in a show of appreciation to his many local fans.

St. Louis, who plays for the Tampa Bay Lightning and lives in South Burlington in the off-season, will be available for group photos at the reception, which will be open to the public and held in the exhibition hall in the University of Vermont Conference Center at the Sheraton. Due to the limited time St. Louis will have the Stanley Cup and the large crowds expected for the event, individual photos will not be possible, and St. Louis will not be able to sign autographs.

theview

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Awards and Honors

Joanne Knapp, assistant professor of animal science, and **Carol Delaney**, extension small ruminant dairy specialist are beginning a project to help Vermont dairy goat farmers to implement current energy and protein recommendations. The three-year effort is funded with \$135,000 from the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program.

Kathleen Manning, associate professor of integrated professional studies, received a Fulbright Senior Specialists grant in education at Beijing Normal University. The senior specialists program, a complement to the traditional Fulbright Scholar program, offers academics and professionals two- to six-week grants to study at academic institutions in 140 countries.

Dr. **Sharon Mount**, associate professor of pathology, has been named the recipient of the Buttles Professorship in Pathology for 2004-2009. Established in 1984 to honor Ernest Hiram Buttles, a professor of pathology and bacteriology at the College of Medicine from 1921 to 1946, the professorship is awarded to a pathology faculty member who is recognized for their commitment to and excellence in the teaching of pathology.

Glenn Rogers, extension associate professor, was elected president of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents at its annual meeting July 15 in Orlando, Fla. The NCAAA is a professional organization of nearly 7,000 current or retired extension county agents.

Robert Tyzbir, professor of nutrition and food sciences, received a U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Agriculture Sciences Excellence in Teaching Award. The award, which includes \$2,000 toward instructional programs, will be presented during the Nov. 13-16 annual meeting of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges in San Diego, Calif.

Publications and Presentations

Matthew Carpenter, a 2004 UVM doctoral degree recipient, and co-authors Dr. **John Hughes**, professor of psychiatry and psychology, **Laura Solomon**, research professor of psychology and Peter Callas, research associate professor of mathematics and statistics, published an article titled "Both smoking reduction with nicotine replacement therapy and motivational advice increase future cessation among smokers unmotivated to quit" in the June *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*.

The **Center on Disability and Community Inclusion** and the Vermont Department of Education recently co-hosted the BEST Summer Institute, which was held June 20-25. More than 300 school administrators, teachers, special educators and other school staff attended week-long mini-courses and workshops focusing on peaceful and respectful classrooms and schools. The event presented a number of prevention and responding strategies for bullying and harassment.

Stephanie Kaza, an associate professor in the Environmental Program, spoke at a conference, "Faith and Progressive Policy: Proud Past, Promising Future," on June 9 in Washington, D.C. The event was hosted by the Center for American Progress. Kaza shared the podium with Taylor Branch, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-63* and former EPA administrator Carol Browner among others.

Dennis Mahoney, professor of German and Russian, has published an article on "*Heinrich von Ofterdingen* oder Die Macht der Musik" in *Novalis: Poesie und Poetik*, edited by Herbert Uerlings. The paper considers the use, function, meaning, and power of music in Novalis' major novel of German Romanticism. It is shown that music has had and continues to have a considerable influence on building a more humane world.

Sanjeeva Murthy, associate professor of physics, published an article, "Recent Developments in Polymer Characterization Using X-ray Diffraction," in the May issue of *The Rigaku Journal*.

Barbara McIntosh, associate professor of business administration, had an article appear in *Nursing and Health Policy Review*. The article, "The Older Nurse: Clues for Retention," was written in collaboration with **Betty Rambur**, dean of nursing and health science, **Mary Val Palumbo**, research associate of nursing, and **Joan Mongeon**, data analyst in biostatistics, and suggests ways to restructure work in efforts to address nursing labor shortages.

The **Vermont Project for Children and Youth with Deaf-blindness** of the **Center on Disability and Community Inclusion** hosted a multi-state mentorship training on June 23-25. The training was the kick-off session for a five-year federally supported program designed to prepare mentors and leaders from Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia and Vermont in the identification, and intervention, and service development for children with Cortical Visual Impairment, the current leading cause of visual impairment in children. Christine Roman of Marshall University, a expert in this area, provided the mentorship-training seminar, which she collaboratively developed with directors and coordinators of deaf-blind projects from the participating states.

Dr. **Scott Wagers**, assistant professor of medicine, authored an article titled "Extravascular fibrin, plasminogen activator, plasminogen activator inhibitors, and airway hyperresponsiveness" in the July *Journal of Clinical Investigation*. Co-authors on the report include **Ryan Norton**, laboratory technician in medicine; **Lisa Rinaldi**, laboratory technician in medicine; **Jason Bates**, research professor of medicine; Dr. **Burton E. Sobel**, professor and chair of medicine; and **Charles Irvin**, professor of medicine.

Jianke Yang, associate professor of mathematics and statistics, published an article in the May issue of the *New Journal of Physics* May analyzing the stability of vortex solitons in photorefractive optical lattice. His work was supported in part by a NASA EPSCoR grant. To read the article visit this link: [New Journal of Physics](#).

Appointments

Gary Derr, who served as executive assistant to the provost, will be assuming additional responsibilities as chief of staff and executive assistant to the president and provost. As chief of staff, Derr will coordinate the staff functions of the executive offices, provide high-level support to the president and provost, represent those senior level offices as requested by president and provost, coordinate senior level strategic planning activities and serve as a member of the president's senior leadership team.

Jennifer Johnson, a three-time All-American at Penn State and a co-captain of the Canadian National Women's Lacrosse Team, has been named head coach of women's lacrosse at the University of Vermont. Johnson, 27, has served as an assistant coach at Penn State and Cornell, where she helped guide the Big Red to the NCAA Final Four in 2002. An assistant coach for the Canadian National Developmental Team, she is also the director and coach of the Canadian Xposure Lacrosse Camp in Ontario.

Dr. **G. Scott Waterman**, associate professor of psychiatry, has been named Associate Dean for Student Affairs at the College of Medicine. Waterman joined the UVM faculty in 1994 and replaces Dr. **Marga Sproul** who has retired. In his new role, Waterman will oversee approximately 400 medical students at the college.

Deborah Neher will become chair and associate professor of the Plant and Soil Science Department on Sept. 1.

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Sugar Technology Goes South

CDAE faculty exports Vermont know-how to help Honduran farmers increase profits, improve the environment

By Jeff Wakefield

Article published Jul 21, 2004

As more Honduran farmers adopt environmentally friendly techniques adapted from Vermont maple producers, a Community Development and Applied Economics researcher hopes sights like this one become less common. (Photo: Dan Baker)

Rising unsteadily over a dilapidated shack, the smokestack bleeds a plume of thick, dark smoke into the Honduran countryside.

It's a disturbing photograph, evoking both hopeless poverty and environmental degradation. But to the man who took it, CDAE lecturer and former Kroepsch-Maurice Teaching Award-winner Dan Baker, it's a source of inspiration.

For the past four years, Baker has worked tirelessly — during the summer, over holiday

breaks, and during a service-learning class he teaches in the country — to persuade a group of 150-odd rural sugarcane farmers in Taulabe and the Comayagua region to break a bad habit: using burning tires as fuel in the sugar-making process.

The smoldering tires, a cheaper source of fuel than scarce firewood, create the smoke plume in the photo and constitute a major public health and environmental hazard.

The solution Baker is peddling would seem quixotic if it weren't finally yielding such positive results: replacing the inefficient flat-pan evaporators favored by the Hondurans, who use them to boil sugar cane juice into a block of dark sugar called panela, with highly efficient, flue-style versions similar to the ones New Englanders have used for 100 years to make maple syrup.

The maple-syrup-style evaporators burn so efficiently that Honduran farmers are able to use the waste from the sugarcane itself — the stalks and leaves, or bagasse — as fuel, saving money and eliminating pollution.

Baker first went to Honduras in the late 1990s with CDAE associate professor Deep Ford to help with a project designed to empower small-scale coffee growers. The sponsor of the project, the Partners of the Americas's Farmer to Farmer program, took Baker aside and asked him to investigate the tire-burning problem on cane farms.

Baker, himself a maple syrup producer, saw an opportunity to share the technology he was using back home in his Starksboro, Vt., sugar shack with the Hondurans.

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[A Wartime Life in Letters](#)

Though Betty Bandel is usually remembered here as a productive scholar — she published many books on Shakespeare, Vermont history and New England — and an energetic and demanding teacher, she was also a senior Army officer during World War II. The story of a young WAC officer's everyday life during an epic conflict, once almost lost, is revealed in a new book.

[Summer of Opportunity](#)

Growing up in Buffalo, N. Y., Alexa Schmitt had a romanticized view of Vermont as a bucolic state with few social ills. That impression changed in June, just a few days into her summer internship with the Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger and the Winooski Summer Lunch Program.

[Every Breath We Take](#)

"When you think of air, you don't think of solids," says chemistry graduate student Brian LaFranchi. But the air we take in contains millions of solid particles, each about a hundredth of the width of a single human hair. These particles, in turn, are made up of thousands of chemical compounds that regulate global cooling and influence human health.

"I thought to myself, 'Oh, boy, what you guys are doing is bad for your health, it's bad for the environment, and it's so inefficient,'" Baker says.

Yankee ingenuity

On his next trip to Honduras, Baker brought a flue pan with him and, over the next several visits, built the first prototype evaporator and oven. In its earliest incarnation, the new evaporator lived up to its billing and then some.

"It was boiling too hard," Baker says, drawing so much heat into the evaporator pan that the scum, or cachaza, mixed into the clean juice, rather than being skimmed off. The resulting sugar was too dark and had an off flavor.

Baker worked for two years to solve the problem, even consulting with engineers, who described the problem as "complicated."

"Everyone had given up on us, " Baker says. "Our funders wanted us to go home, write up our report, and move on to the next project. I'm pretty stubborn, though. I don't give up that easily."

Baker tried many design modifications, but it was a suggestion from one of the farmers in the Taulabe cooperative that did the trick. "Once we finally got it, it was like, 'This works' and the whole project shifted," Baker says.

Using their own money, about \$450 per rig, farmers in the region built 13 of the new evaporator-oven combos. They not only began producing a better product, they also made more profits, as they were eliminating fuel costs.

Other farmers noticed, as did funders. Last September, the Interamerican Bank made \$70,000 in low-interest loans available to farmers who wanted to build the evaporators and make other improvements to their operations. In January, Baker received \$145,000 from the bank and a small foundation (UVM also contributed) to run a series of training workshops for 200 farmers, many from outside the region. The workshops, which began in June, have been going well, even though it can be a challenge to connect with the often skeptical farmers, many of whom are illiterate.

Baker's teaching gifts are on full display in the workshops, which are designed as much to motivate farmers to change their practices as to give them practical advice on how to build and use the new evaporators.

For the economics lesson on day one, for instance, Baker directs a skit, gathering six to eight producers in front of the room. "We have one guy, who's using an old evaporator, sell his sugar, then pay all the people in his production chain — the guy who cut the cane, the guy with mule, the workers. When he gets home, he's got one lempiras. Then we go through the same skit with a producer using a new evaporator. When he gets home, he's got two lempiras. I ask them why, and the guy who sells tires says, 'I didn't get paid.' It goes over really well."

While it's still too early to call, the enthusiasm of the workshop trainees and federal agencies like the ministries of agriculture and natural resources, combined with the success of farmers already using the new evaporators, bodes well for the future. "You don't often get a technology that can do so many good things," says Baker. "I feel lucky to be involved."

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A Wartime Life in Letters

By Heidi Hill

Article published Jul 21, 2004



Professor Emerita Betty Bandel, whose letters describing life as a female officer during World War II were recently published in a book edited by library staffer Sylvia Bugbee, poses with a jeep in a vintage photograph. (Photo: U.S. Army)

Tears suddenly began to flow when Betty Bandel, professor emeritus of English, toured the White House while in Washington for a national Shakespeare festival. As Bandel's colleague Ed Feidner, now a professor emeritus of theater, asked what was wrong, Bandel reminisced fondly of her meeting with Eleanor Roosevelt during World War II.

Though Bandel, now 92 and quite frail, is usually remembered here as a productive scholar — she published many

books on Shakespeare, Vermont history and New England — and an energetic and demanding teacher, she was also a successful senior Army officer during the war. The engaging story of a young WAC officer's everyday life during an epic conflict, which was almost lost, is revealed in a new book, *The World War II Letters of Lt. Col. Betty Bandel, Women's Army Corps*, edited by Sylvia Bugbee, Special Collections assistant archivist and co-published by The Women's Military Press and the University Press of New England.

A life of letters

In 1942, Bandel left her job as a reporter at the *Arizona Daily Star* and joined the Women's Army Corps (then called the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps). Graduating second in her class at officer training school, Bandel was chosen to serve as an aide to WAAC Director Oveta Culp Hobby. Bandel's leadership skills and dependability often found her performing tasks as acting deputy director for Hobby, and she quickly rose through the ranks, leading the WAC Army Airforce Division and becoming a lieutenant colonel in 1944. Bandel left the army to pursue a graduate degree at Columbia and joined UVM's English Department, where she taught from 1947 to 1975.

But the biographical sketch doesn't capture the texture of the full story. Bandel herself does that in the hundreds of letters she wrote her mother about everything from meeting Eleanor Roosevelt to negotiating the bureaucracy to the cost of taxicabs. Those letters were almost lost and forgotten, however, until Ed Feidner and others around the university started looking for them.

When Feidner, a longtime friend of Bandel's, published a collection of Civil War letters, it occurred to him that Bandel had been in the military and was very close to her mother, who had lived with Bandel in the last years of her life. "I asked Betty, 'What happened to all those letters that you wrote to your mother during the war?'" Feidner says. "And she said, 'Oh, they're all gone.'"

But the letters weren't gone, as a rummaging raccoon eventually revealed. While cleaning up the mess left by the raccoon in a storage shed left undisturbed for years, Bandel found the letters. Her mother had kept them all. In her 80s at the time of the discovery, Bandel offered the letters to UVM's

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[Summer of Opportunity](#)

Growing up in Buffalo, N. Y., Alexa Schmitt had a romanticized view of Vermont as a bucolic state with few social ills. That impression changed in June, just a few days into her summer internship with the Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger and the Winooski Summer Lunch Program.

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Special Collections and solicited Bugbee's help in editing and publishing.

Bugbee had recorded pieces of Bandel's oral histories as part of an earlier project on prominent figures in women's history, so the story was familiar to her. When the letters came Bugbee's way, however, she was consumed by graduate work and her full-time job at UVM, so she began the project slowly, eventually dedicating evenings and weekends to editing and annotating the letters.

The more Bugbee worked on the letters (the book alone contains 250 of them), the more she got pulled in. She credits Special Collections for supporting her in the arduous process as well as the Women's Studies program, which offered a grant for the undertaking.

"The best part was I felt like I got to know all the people," says Bugbee, noting that she's "met those that are still alive."

As Bugbee poured through the letters, Bandel explained the cast of characters, recalling the vivid details of her 1940s WAC days. Betty recognized the value of the letters historically," Bugbee says. "Not a lot has been written about women in the military."

An intimate glimpse

The book traces Bandel's gradual maturation from an officer to a leader, says Bugbee, who believes the book's letter format offers a personal view that simple narrative lacks. She admits, though, that some of the original letters were long and wordy and full of tales about dinners, requiring plenty of editorial attention. "Betty loved her feed," Bugbee says.

While the letters are at times informal, they also are representative of women's contributions to the war effort. Bandel's recollection of joining the army, found on the book's first page, offers a revealing sense of the times:

"I was sitting at my desk, and Emily Brown was in the [newspaper] morgue getting some stories out, and she called to me and she said, 'Hey Bandel, they're organizing a women's army.' I said, 'Who is?' And she said, 'The United States.' And I said 'Well, let's join.' So we walked down the street and did." When asked what had prompted her to do so, she replied, "That's a funny question. What else would there have been for an unmarried woman except to be in the service one way or another? Everybody was in something. And so you naturally went in."

Though the book was originally scheduled to be published in July, "The University Press of New England busted its butt" to get it out for Memorial Day and the WWII monument dedication," says Bugbee. "They literally dropped ship," she said, noting that the books arrived in the publisher's Arlington bookstore one day before the dedication.

Bugbee and Bandel celebrated the publishing of the book close to home on July 8, with a library event featuring the duo along with remarks from Gen. Martha Rainville of the Vermont National Guard.

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Summer of Opportunity

By Jon Reidel

Article published Jul 20, 2004



Senior Alexa Schmitt teaches children how to plant vegetables as part of her summer internship focused on improving the nutritional habits of the state's youth. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

Growing up in Buffalo, N. Y., Alexa Schmitt had a romanticized view of Vermont as a bucolic state with few social ills. Even after spending a few years at the university, Schmitt's image of Vermont didn't include the stark reality that one in five children live in poverty. That impression changed in June, just a few days into her summer internship with the Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger and the Winooski Summer Lunch Program.

Schmitt's work helping organizations that combat hunger and poor nutrition among the 26,000 children in the state who live in poverty or in homes where adequate food is not always available was supported by a Summer Opportunity Scholarship. This program, which began in 2001, offers senior students majoring in nutrition a summer job and a \$5,000 stipend to use their expertise to help others around the state.

"I came here from New York thinking that Vermont was not a place that had a lot of poverty," Schmitt says. "This experience has opened my eyes to how hunger in Vermont is really a problem. This whole process of being out in the community has taught me how to relate to people and apply my knowledge to the working community."

A career-changing experience

Like many incoming students studying nutrition and food science or dietetics, Schmitt says she envisioned herself working in a hospital as a nutritionist. Her career path took a turn, however, after speaking with Todd Pritchard, a lecturer in nutrition and food sciences, who convinced her to apply for the opportunity scholarships.

Chassidy L'Esperance and Tracie Clarke also received scholarships to support their work in Northfield, Enosburg and Burlington. Clarke observes clinical activities of nutritionists at WIC, helps teach gardening classes, and works with children on nutrition. L'Esperance worked for Friends of Burlington Gardens and a summer lunch program for children in Enosburg. Despite growing up in Vermont, L'Esperance says she too was surprised at the amount of childhood poverty in the state.

"I was oblivious to it," L'Esperance says. "My eyes weren't open to it because I wasn't exposed to it. It's definitely given me a look at the community field of nutrition. Once people realize the need for this type of help in rural areas, I think more people will want to work in this area. I know I do."

L'Esperance helped set up a garden and taught a gardening class to former inmates. She also worked with about 45 kids in Enosburg teaching them about

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Though Betty Bandel is usually remembered here as a productive scholar — she published many books on Shakespeare, Vermont history and New England — and an energetic and demanding teacher, she was also a senior Army officer during World War II. The story of a young WAC officer's everyday life during an epic conflict, once almost lost, is revealed in a new book.

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the food pyramid, meal planning and other aspects of healthy eating. "It's been a lot of fun," she says, "but also very challenging to find activities to accommodate the wide range in ages (2-18)."

Schmitt called food banks, churches and soup kitchens as part of a research project on food stamps. She also taught "Cooking for Life," a course designed to improve food security for children in families living on limited budgets by providing the skills to make nutritious food choices through hands-on preparation of healthy meals. Each lesson includes nutrition information and a cooking demonstration, something Schmitt says she had to learn under fire.

Schmitt also compiled and sent information to schools with students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, but don't take advantage of them for various reasons. In some cases, the stigma associated with accepting free of reduced lunches is enough to prevent a student from accepting one. The number of students receiving school meals has increased dramatically since 1990, according to VTCECH, yet 20,000 children in Vermont still don't eat school meals.

Later in the summer, Schmitt worked with students in the Winooski Summer Lunch Program where she taught them about eating nutritious foods and helped them plant a garden. She said the experience of working with children had a profound affect on her both personally and professionally.

Kim Schwartz, a nutritionist who helped Schmitt prepare lesson plans for students in the Winooski lunch program, says there's definite value in exposing students to all areas of the profession. "I think it's helpful to see all the options instead of just the clinical ones," she says. "Alexa has done a great job this summer. She has a lot of energy and ideas. The kids adore her."

"I think most people [in nutrition] see themselves in a hospital," Schmitt says. "I thought I'd get some experience this summer and that would be it. Now I'm hoping to work in this area of nutrition when I graduate. I think I've found my niche."

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UVM HOMEPAGE

Every Breath We Take

By Lynda Majarian

Article published Jul 20, 2004

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Giuseppe Petrucci (right) works with graduate student Todd Lafranchi on equipment designed to examine airborne particles. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

"When you think of air, you don't think of solids," says chemistry graduate student Brian LaFranchi. But the air we take in contains millions of solid particles, each about a hundredth of the width of a single human hair. These particles, in turn, are made up of thousands of chemical compounds that regulate global cooling and influence human health.

Scientists have long studied inorganic

particles, comprised mainly of sulfates and other salts. Giuseppe Petrucci, assistant professor of chemistry, believes organic particles — made up mainly of carbon and reactive oxygen compounds — deserve the same degree of consideration.

Organic particles are very reactive to atmospheric gases such as ozone and other pollutants, and these chemical reactions can greatly amplify the toxicity of these particles to humans and the environment. Car exhaust, emission from factories and power plants, diesel fuel, trees and even meat burned on the barbecue grill create "particulate pollution" that leads to increased rates of heart and lung disease, as reported last year by the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Of special interest to health professionals is the emerging connection between particulate pollution and aggravated asthma in young children.

Petrucci and his team of four graduate students (including LaFranchi) are currently conducting research on the analysis and atmospheric chemical reactivity of organic particles. "We are developing a unique laser-based scientific instrument that will allow scientists, for the first time, to analyze these important particles directly," Petrucci explains. Using a custom-built particle mass spectrometer, the team samples particles from aerosols they generate in the lab. The particles are then measured and put through a detailed chemical composition analysis. Petrucci has a provisional patent for this method and is forging partnerships with both industry and other universities to utilize his technology to the fullest.

"The immediate goal of our research is to develop our method as a real-time means of monitoring prevalent potentially toxic organic pollutants, he says. "The ability to take better measurements could provide the federal Environmental Protection Agency with more reliable information with which to set air quality standards, and help improve models to predict global climate change."

Getting clarity on air quality

Petrucci recently submitted a grant proposal to the National Science Foundation to underwrite the continued development of a smaller, more portable instrument that will be used in the field. The new instrument will

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measure ambient particulate pollution and provide a clearer picture of air quality across Vermont.

"We are in the process of putting together a prototype instrument to make measurements in the field this fall. We will be measuring organic particles at the Burlington waterfront, in several local neighborhoods and remote rural sites," he says. "People may be surprised to learn how quickly, depending on weather patterns, toxic particles can easily spread to the countryside." Recent epidemiological studies have identified an association between increased hospital admissions and particulate pollution. Can organic particles generated at the Burlington waterfront, for example, affect the environment across the state? A field instrument could reveal the answer.

Petrucci is collaborating on another grant with Brooke Mossman, professor of pathology and director of the Environmental Pathology Training Program in the College of Medicine. Respected as leading experts in the pathology of particles in humans, Mossman and her research group have undertaken pioneering scientific studies regarding risks to human health posed by asbestos, as well as research into the cell and molecular biology of environmental lung disease.

The Petrucci-Mossman proposal to the National Institutes of Health focuses on the potential physiological impact of airborne organic particles on human subjects. They will look at a cascade effect, by which organic particles can change DNA and trigger genetic mutations that can manifest in future generations.

"My goal as mentor would be to help Joe and his team address the mechanisms of how airborne particles may injure cells and cause disease and to keep him up to date on the biology of particle-induced diseases," Mossman explains.

The grant has provisions to get more people involved in the research. Recruiting curious new scientists shouldn't be a problem, as aerosol analysis is important to the environment and public health. "You'd be surprised at how important particles are in regulating climate," says LaFranchi, a 2003 recipient of the EPA Star Award from the EPA's National Center for Environmental Research. "I came to Vermont because of its strong commitment to the environment," he adds, "and I'm excited about participating in such state-of-the-art analytical chemistry. I really think that this work has very important implications and that it will further UVM's reputation as a leader in environmental research."

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