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[Julia Johnson](#) *the view* recently interviewed Dr. Julia Johnson, who talked about recent findings raising questions about hormone replacement therapy.

## THE WEEK IN VIEW

**Oct. 31 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Benefits Fair: Benefit providers and Human Resources staff on hand with benefits information. Memorial Lounge, Waterman. Also, Nov. 1, 7:30 a.m.-2 p.m.**

**Nov. 4 7:30 p.m. VPT Profile: Sarah Carleton, Theatre Department, is interviewed. Also: Nov. 5, 2 a.m.; Nov. 7, 12:30 a.m.; Nov. 10, 1:320 p.m.; Nov. 11, 12:30 a.m.**

**Nov. 5 3:30 p.m. Lecture: "The Sense of Community," Lynne Bond, psychology. 301 Williams Hall. 656-0095**

**Nov. 6 Noon Lecture: "Developing Community Partnerships: Lessons Learned from the Field," Gail Champanois, city liaison; Tom Hudspeth, natural resources; Janet Bossange, education. Grace Coolidge room, Waterman. 656-1355**

**Nov. 6 12:30 p.m. Lecture: "African Americans in Stalin's Russia," Denise Youngblood, history. John Dewey Lounge, Old Mill. 656-1096. Register: 847-2886**

**Nov. 6 3 p.m. Learning Days Lecture: Dolores Sandoval, emeritus professor, "In Celebration of Diversity and Our Common Ground." Memorial Lounge, Waterman. 656-7924**

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Warren Bickel, professor of psychiatry and director of Vermont's first methadone clinic, answers questions at the Oct. 25 press conference to announce the clinic's opening in the University Health Center. (Photo by UVM Medical Photography)

### Methadone Clinic Opens

After a long wait, Vermont's first methadone clinic officially opened Oct. 28, at the University Health Center.

Named "The Chittenden Center: An Addictions Treatment Program," the clinic is a program of The Howard Center for Human Services, in alliance with Fletcher Allen Health Care and the College of Medicine, and is directed by Warren Bickel, interim chair and professor of psychiatry. A press conference announcing the clinic opening was held at UHC Oct. 25.

Despite a two-month delay in the clinic's opening, all four speakers at Friday's press conference – including Todd Centybear from the Howard, Edwin Colodny and Dr. John Brumsted from Fletcher Allen and Dr. Joseph Warshaw, dean of the College of Medicine – commented on their collective pride in the outcome of months of collaboration. "This opening is an achievement for everyone who has worked very hard in planning this high-quality service for this underserved patient population," Brumsted said.

The Chittenden Center is modeled in part after UVM's successful, experimental buprenorphine treatment program, which has been directed by Bickel at UHC for 12 years and is funded by the National Institutes of Health. Buprenorphine is an alternative treatment to methadone for opioid dependence and was approved by the FDA earlier this month. Bickel said that, for the time being, the clinic will focus solely on methadone treatment and counseling for heroin addicts but

### Federal Grant to Help Reduce Gender Violence

A \$300,000 grant from the U. S. Department of Justice Violence Against Women Office will help the UVM Women's Center expand campus and community programs to reduce violent crimes against women on campus. Two years ago, UVM was among 20 institutions out of 120 applicants to receive the initial DOJ grants; now it is among only eight of the originally funded grantees to receive continued funding.

The goal of the grant is to strengthen community response to violence against women through education and advocacy. Objectives focus on developing and strengthening security and investigation and education strategies to prevent and respond to relationship violence, sexual assault and stalking crimes on campus.

The central component in UVM's program is the Campus Advocacy Program. Anne Smith, who was hired as a victims' advocate through the original DOJ grant, offers confidential support to victims and provides them with information about their medical, legal and counseling options and local resources. Smith works with campus and community service providers and law enforcement and speaks regularly on campus to make students, staff and faculty aware of advocacy services. She will collaborate with UVM's Office of Judicial Affairs to develop training programs for campus disciplinary boards and participate in the Chittenden Unit for Special Investigation's First Responder Training team.

"It's hard to feel like part of a community if you don't feel safe," said Sharon Snow, director of the Women's Center. Recent statistics reflect that one in 20 women are victims of rape or attempted rape on college campuses each year. Snow said that those statistics are unreliable because many gender-related crimes are never reported. "We expect the number of reported violent incidents to go up," she said, "as more women become aware that we offer a safe, reliable place and resources to meet their needs."

The center's plans to reach out to student athletes, Greek life, ALANA and LGBT members of the campus community and to enhance a centralized response protocol involving university staff, campus and local law enforcement, the Women's Rape Crisis Center and Women Helping Battered Women.

Also, a new campus-based Gender Violence Response Team, staffed by campus and community members, will focus on campus policies and coordinate additional education and

will broaden its services to include additional addictions and treatment options in the future.

The College of Medicine contributed funding to help with the clinic's start-up costs. "As Vermont's only College of Medicine, we have an obligation – and a mission – to help ensure that vulnerable populations receive compassionate, effective care and to conduct research that supports that care," Warshaw said. "I feel confident that this clinic will serve as the mechanism necessary to help those in need to return to being productive members of society."

Located on the first floor of UHC adjacent to UVM's Substance Abuse Treatment Center, the Chittenden Center is equipped with a state-of-the-art security system and urinalysis equipment and features protective glass in the methadone dispensing area, as well as a 3,000-pound safe that holds the methadone.

Although the clinic will not begin dispensing methadone until later this week, staff members have been screening prospective clients. When running at capacity, which Bickel estimates will be in about three months, the program will provide methadone for 100 people. Patients are being enrolled in the program on a first-come, first-served basis, with priority extended to patients who have been traveling out of state, are supported by the state or who are pregnant.

In addition to Bickel, the program will share a number of staff with UVM. Lisa Marsch, research assistant professor of psychiatry, will serve as the clinic's associate director, and Marne Stothart, a clinical research coordinator and counselor in the department of psychiatry, will function as the clinical coordinator. In addition, clinic personnel include experienced substance abuse counselors, lab technicians, nurses and administrative staff.

Information: 656-3700.

### **UVM Aims to Raise \$120,000 for United Way**

The United Way banner is hanging across the front of Morrill Hall and employees are finding pledge packets tucked in their mailboxes as UVM begins its campaign to raise \$120,000 in donations for United Way of Chittenden County.

As part of the fundraiser, employees are invited to enjoy cider and doughnuts on the Green on Oct. 31 from noon to 1 p.m. (rain location in Waterman). Employees who return their pledge cards by Nov. 8 are eligible to enter a raffle to win one of many prizes including a year of free Zone 1 parking, tickets to theater and athletic events and gift certificates for meals at campus eateries. Winners will be announced Nov. 15 on the [UVM United Way website](#).

Alumnus Lisa Ventriss is UVM's campaign cabinet chair. John Sama and Mary Provost, who received United Way's Campaign Champions award for their work over the years in coordinating the UVM campaign, are again at the helm of the campus-

prevention services. That effort includes reframing the concept of gender violence as a societal and community issue with men as equal partners in the solution.

"Our goal is to create a campus culture that has zero tolerance for gender violence and that holds perpetrators responsible," said Luann Rolley, project director.

Information on the grant: Luann Rolley, 656-2925; information on campus advocacy services and resources: 656-7892 or [Advocacy](#)

### **Ace in the Holes**

Gordon Woodworth, UVM's sports information director, is a man prone to excitement in the presence of athletic excellence. It is, after all, his job. But Woodworth's enthusiasm reached a crescendo Oct. 22 when golfer Tom Rogers, a first-year student from Acton, MA, won the New England Intercollegiate Golf Championship, on the second Catamount ever to do so.

"Historic and unbelievable!" said Woodworth, who also helps coach the team.

Rogers, though no less pleased, was somewhat more restrained. "I knew if I played well I had a chance," he said. After Rogers' tee shot on the playoff hole, Coach Mike Gilligan told him, "Just have fun," and that, said Rogers, "changed my perspective just enough that it was easier to cope with."

The young golfer shot two rounds of 74 on the par-72, then parred a one-hole playoff (a high-pressure affair occasioned by Rogers near-disastrous three-putt of the final hole) to win the championship, which featured 232 athletes from 47 teams. With his play on that historic hole, Rogers joined former UVM All-American and local golfing legend John Donnelly Sr. as the only Catamounts to win the NEIGA crown. Donnelly won the title in 1964 at the Rutland Country Club.

### **Leahy Addresses Vermont's Outstanding Teachers**

"You are the instrument by which we measure the success of our schools," Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) told teachers at UVM's 22nd annual Outstanding Teacher Recognition Day Oct. 23. "Your knowledge, skill and experience are exactly what we need in each and every one of our classrooms," he continued. "That is why I believe that if the federal government truly wants to see our students achieve academic success, we should be focusing on investing in our teachers, rather than on imposing new, unfunded testing mandates that burden our states and local communities."

Leahy, a strong advocate of after-school programs told the 83 teachers being honored by their peers as the state's best that they were being lauded not only for their efforts in the classroom but in the community after school as

wide effort.

The United Way of Chittenden County's Community Campaign Goal is \$3.65 million and 500 new donors. It provides funding to a network of services and programs through 30 member agencies and community partners. The county-wide campaign runs through the end of November. For more information, visit [www.unitedwaycc.org](http://www.unitedwaycc.org).

well.

"Teaching is a hard job," he said. "And opportunities such as this, where you are told how much you are appreciated, are few and far between."

Leahy was not on the pre-published program, since his office could not commit to his presence until the day before the event.

"There was an audible gasp, when he was introduced," said Gloria Reynolds one of the event organizers. "People were very excited."

The turnout for the event, organized by the College of Education and Social Services was the largest ever. "And we're particularly proud that of the 83 teachers recognized, 21 were UVM alums," said Associate Dean Rosalind Andreas.

Dean Jill Tarule delivered opening remarks; President Daniel Mark Fogel gave the keynote Address; and Provost John Bramley presented certificates to the award winners.

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This neutrino detection apparatus earned Penn's Raymond Davis a share of the 2002 Nobel Prize for Physics. Find out more about Davis's work – and the economics and chemistry prizes – from UVM researchers during their Oct. 31 talk. For more details, see story below. *(Photo courtesy of the Brookhaven National Laboratory.)*

### Eyes on the (Nobel) Prize

Give the UVM researchers an hour, and they'll give you a Nobel Prize. Three of them, in fact.

Three experts will give 20-minute presentations explaining the 2002 Nobel Prizes awarded in their disciplines at 12 p.m. on Oct. 31 in Billings's Martin Luther King Lounge. The presenters are Sara Solnick, economics; Dwight Matthews, chemistry and medicine; and Bob Arns, physics.

Solnick will discuss Daniel Kahneman of Princeton University's work integrated psychological research into economics, explaining how humans make judgements and decisions under uncertain conditions.

Arns will cover astrophysics work from Raymond Davis Jr. and Masatoshi Koshihira in detecting cosmic neutrinos, furthering our understanding of how stars are born.

Dwight Matthews will take on a prize awarded to John Fenn and Koichi Tanaka for their work developing better methods to study biological "macromolecules," for example proteins. Previous techniques were capable of analyzing only smaller molecules in detail

Information: 656-2633

### Fleming Sets Jamaica Theme for

### Hasazi to Deliver President's Lecture

Susan Hasazi, professor of education, will give the fourth presentation in the President's Lecture Series for First Year Students on Nov. 4, at 7 p.m., in Billings Campus Center Theatre. Her topic, "What's So Special About Special Education?" reflects her extensive research into the evaluation and improvement of educational programs implemented nationwide in response to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act at the state and local levels.

Hasazi's distinguished work has been recognized nationally. She was the 1995 recipient of the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation International Award in Mental Retardation, and she was named a University Scholar in 1996.

The lecture is free and open to the public. A reception for Professor Hasazi will follow her presentation.

### Commemorating Vermont's Worst Flood

The ice storm paled in comparison with Vermont's largest disaster, the 1927 flood. During those terrible two days, the water surged and surged, claiming 84 lives, more than 1,000 bridges and hundreds of miles of railroad tracks and roads.

The terrible flood left an indelible mark on the state that lingers now, 75 years later. To explore those long-term implications, and the history of the flood itself, the Center for Research on Vermont and National Weather Service are sponsoring a commemoration on Sunday, Nov. 3 at 3:00 p.m. in Memorial Lounge, Waterman.

The scheduled speakers are Samuel Hand, Richard Sweterlitsch and Arthur Woolf of UVM; and Gregory Hanson and Paul Sisson of the National Weather Service. Paul Eschholz is the moderator.

A display of historical images is planned, and attendees are invited to share their memories of the flood. Information: 656-4389

## Community Day

The Fleming Museum will hold its 18th annual Community Family Day Nov. 2, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. This year's theme is Fiesta Jamaica, focusing on island arts and music, selected to complement the museum's exhibit *Soon come: The Art of Contemporary Jamaica*.

The day will feature the Caribbean rhythms and vocals of the musical duo Taino. Sana and Papo Nichel create their powerful sound using vocals, guitars, congas, bongos, bamboo flutes, cuaro, requinto and other instruments from Jamaica's diverse ethnic origins.

UVM art students and community volunteers will present the art activities. A light lunch will be for sale. Admission is \$3 for adults and \$2 for children.

Information: 656-0750

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Oct. 30-Nov. 5, 2002

**Awards and Honors**

**Alison Brody**, associate professor of biology, and **James Hoffmann**, associate professor of botany and agricultural biochemistry, have been named co-directors of the new cross-college Integrated Biological Sciences Program. Throughout this academic year, the co-directors and a newly formed steering committee will lead the faculty in both units in developing curriculum for this coordinated effort.

**Burton Wilcke**, clinical associate professor of biomedical technologies, has been appointed chair of the Department of Biomedical Technologies. Wilcke joined the UVM faculty in 1990 and served as interim chair from July through December 2001. He is looking at development of a curriculum that addresses emerging global threats.

**Publications and Presentations**

The first book published by the recently established University of Namibia Press was a volume titled *Challenges for Anthropology in the African Renaissance*, co-edited by **Robert Gordon**, professor of anthropology, and Debie Lebeau. The volume was sponsored by UNESCO, the Wenner-Gren Foundation and the Schlettwein-Stiftung.

**Dennis Mahoney**, professor of German, has published an essay on "Goethe's Autobiographical Writings" in *The Cambridge Companion to Goethe*, pp. 147-159. He discusses various works by Goethe in which the author reflects on the artistic, historical, political, scientific and social aspects of his long life. It is shown that as famous as Goethe was in his lifetime, he was only one part of an age rich in artistic and intellectual achievements. Mahoney's chapter is part of 15 essays written by the most distinguished Goethe scholars of Canada, Great Britain and the United States.

**Kurt Oughstun**, professor of electrical engineering, computer science and mathematics, and **Natalie Cartwright**, doctoral candidate in mathematics, recently attended the opening workshop on Inverse Problem Methodology in Complex Stochastic Models at the Statistical and Applied Mathematical Sciences Institute (Duke, NCSU, UNC, NISS) at Research Triangle Park in North Carolina. Oughstun presented an invited talk on Electromagnetics in Dielectric and Conductive Materials at this workshop.

**Kevin McKenna**, professor of Russian, published an article on "Politics and the Russian Proverb: A Retrospective of Pravda Political Cartoons in the 1990s" in *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship*, 19 (2002), 225-252. McKenna used 16 cartoons to illustrate the utility of joining proverbial wisdom of the past to the political tasks and impressions of the present. The combination of visual metaphors with the rhetorical appeal of folk wisdom becomes a powerful weapon for the cartoonists as they comment on economic, political and social concerns in Russia.

UVM and St. Michael's College will receive the Innovative Achievement in Auxiliary Services Award from the National Association of College Auxiliary Services at its annual meeting in Vancouver in October 2003. The award recognizes outstanding development, implementation and creative entrepreneurship of new and existing programs in auxiliary services. According to **Patty Eldred**, director of auxiliary services at UVM, the two schools were chosen for the award because of their comprehensive partnership in implementing the CATcard program.

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## Spider Woman

By Lynda Majarian



Hands on: Linden Higgins, biology lecturer, takes a direct approach to studying the population genetics of spiders.

The ubiquitous plastic spiders spinning cottony Halloween webs have nothing to do with ecologist Linden Higgins' research, although the spiders she studies are comparable in size and flexibility, and are just as scary to the arachnophobes among us.

Higgins, a lecturer of biology, is conducting a plasticity study on giant tropical spiders, but the plasticity she is working

on refers to genetic adaptation, not the Creepy Crawler spider kit you may have had growing up. Specifically, she works with spiders known as *Nephila clavipes*, which can span five inches, the size of a tea saucer, and weigh up to 3.5 grams.

Higgins is hoping to better understand the population genetics of the spiders, which exist in many different environments yet exhibit little genetic variation. Higgins and Juan Nuñez Farfan of the Instituto de Ecología in Mexico are conducting the research with funding from the National Science Foundation and its Mexican equivalent, CONACyT.

"One of the most fascinating things about these spiders is that you can find them in the tropical rainforests of Veracruz, mid-altitude coffee plantations, Pacific coast dry forests and in the U.S. Gulf coast, and they are able to adapt to all of these environments," Higgins explains. She studies the location-induced differences in the spiders' growth size and rate and the size of their webs, as well as variations in the growing season, rainfall, food sources and daylight in the environments where the spiders live.

And there lies the quandary. "When we bring spiders from various locations into the laboratory and treat them the same way," says Higgins, "all the observed differences disappear."

### Rubber spiders?

She concluded the spiders were exhibiting "phenotypic plasticity," a process where individual animals respond to individual environments. Other than a few studies of amphibians, phenotypic plasticity in animals is a relatively new scientific frontier.

"Humans generally change the environment to suit their needs," Higgins observes. However, we do exhibit some plasticity: our skin produces melanin, for instance, to help us tolerate the sun. We also migrate frequently and easily, which is something the spiders do not appear to be adept at, Higgins says.

This elicits questions: What factors might cause or allow the spiders to adapt to so many diverse environments? What prevents the spiders from splitting into different species, each suitable to its indigenous climate, instead of adapting

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Sylvia Bugbee, a university archivist, is spinning the dial of the hulking green safe, trying to unlock the cantankerous mechanism.

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Winooski's John F. Kennedy Elementary school is the kind of place whose charms don't always show up in standardized test reports. The school has 16 percent special needs students, and 12 percent need extra help with English.

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*the view* recently interviewed Dr. Julia Johnson, who talked about recent findings raising questions about hormone replacement therapy.



themselves to vastly different physical locales? The answers might help ecologists determine which animals have the plasticity attributes to survive environmental changes due to global warming and the destruction of the rainforest.

Higgins, who came to UVM this fall, has worked with the spiders since 1982. During her doctoral studies at the University of Texas and postdoctoral studies in Mexico, her focus has been the spiders' behavior, physiology and population ecology in Mexico, Panama and the United States. Pending additional funding from the National Science Foundation, she will launch a plasticity study similar to her current research of *Nephila clavipes* indigenous to Texas, Louisiana and Florida, where they are commonly known as "golden silk spiders" because of their webs' yellow hue.

That will involve setting up a spider habitat or lab on campus. For now, Higgins has just the spider legs shipped in from Mexico. "One leg provides enough DNA for my research," she says. "I try not to take legs from the spiders who have already lost a limb from a predator or a mishap. Otherwise, they can get along just fine with five."

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## Saving for the Future

By Kevin Foley



Sylvia Bugbee, a special collections librarian, is the keeper of the university's past. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

Sylvia Bugbee, a special collections librarian and university archivist, is spinning the dial of the hulking green safe, trying to unlock the momentarily cantankerous mechanism. "Slower this time," she murmurs, restarting her sequence of spins. She turns and turns again, and finally something clicks and the heavy door slowly swings open, revealing a few shelves of massive leather volumes.

Bugbee laughs. "Ah, eau d' library," she says, reaching inside for a folder as the smell of old paper and leather seeps into the room. "Some people don't like the smell, but I do."

The university archives, housed on movable shelves within the research annex building on East Avenue, contains Emeritus Professor Frank Manchel's papers and film memorabilia, a black hole of workstudy productivity. ("They go to his stuff," says Bugbee, "and they don't come back for a while.") There are boxes for all the university's presidents, and handwritten minutes from one of the first trustees meetings on November 3, 1791: *...whereas the education of youth is necessary for the advancement of morality, virtue and high happiness...* There are letters from Woodrow Wilson (from Princeton) and J.P. Morgan (from Wall Street, the missive fittingly accompanied by a check for an undergraduate named Torrey whom he "didn't recall"). There are even files of *the view*, printed for posterity on acid-free paper.

The archives are a wonderland of minutia, a repository of both the daily labors of the dead (19th century files from, say, the general counsel's office) and photography and memorabilia. Curiosities abound: A lecture from Matthew Buckham, who headed UVM for decades starting in 1871, titled "Dead Languages Forsooth!" Dozens of photographs documenting Kake Walk, which evolved from the hideous racial caricatures of the 1920s to the more stylized, but no less disturbing, black face of the early 1960s. (The archives contain records of complaints against the event as well; Bugbee finds the chronicles of that early dissent "refreshing.") There are also less somber artifacts, like the canes that UVM students used in intra-class tussles.

Bugbee is personally partial to the photographs which, she says, tell you things that no written narrative can. She also delights in building her knowledge of the collection, and the university, through accretion, through the process of answering one reference query at a time.

"That's a lot of the pleasure of it for me, the reference work," she says. "Everyone is looking for something slightly different, and I learn something from every request."

**To the archives**

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Bugbee brings a historian's sensibility to her work. After graduating from UVM in the early 1960s, she returned to school to earn a master's degree (her thesis was on the early settlement of a New England village). Eventually she moved on to the University of Colorado, where she completed coursework for a Ph.D. in English history. She returned to Vermont and UVM in 1998, when she joined the special collections staff.

Her training helps her make decisions about what collections to bring into the archive and what materials to pare down. While materials are used for everything from coursework for historical preservation students to resolving tricky administrative questions, their primary purpose is to serve as a resource for historians.

Recognizing that responsibility, Bugbee and her colleagues try to preserve materials that past archivists might have ignored. Student publications and proceedings that counter the university administration's stand are one example. Another example, particularly important to Bugbee, is documenting the lives, work and activism of women and minorities at the university. After all, an archive may store and organize the physical documentation of the past, but it does not and can not hold the past in place, static and unchanging. Events, and interpretations, march on in unpredictable ways.

Bugbee says that one constant, however, is the persistent way UVM has reflected (and participated in) larger societal debates.

"The more time I spend with the archive materials, the more I see the constant connections between the university and the events of a given era," she says. "Civil rights, women's rights, political crusades. We are never apart from the times."

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For more information about Special Collections and the University Archives, see [this site](#).

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UVM HOMEPAGE

## A Winooski School's Resurgence

By Cheryl Dorschner



Poetry jam: UVM lecturers Jane Mekkelsen (right) and Ellen Thompson help elementary students at Winooski's JFK school show off their reading, writing and performance skills during an event last May. (Photo: Cheryl Dorschner)

Winooski's John F. Kennedy Elementary school is the kind of place whose charms don't always show up in standardized test reports. The school has 16 percent special needs students, 12 percent need extra help with English (some classes have five different languages spoken within them), and receives considerable state and federal aid.

But when the state released scores on Sept. 19, JFK's results were at or above the state

average, continuing an upward trend. Principal Robert Pequignot says that the school's accomplishments "defy most results when it comes to schools with children of high need," and he gives much of the credit to a three-year partnership with UVM's College of Education and Social Services

"Our literacy faculty worked to develop a systems reform effort in literacy that has been wildly successful with genuine gain in kids' reading and in teachers' confidence and skill in teaching reading," says Jill Tarule, the college's dean.

### Spreading the word

Both UVM and the school have collected data and scores to prove the effectiveness of these efforts, and have presented the results in journals and at conferences nationwide. Pequignot spoke at the National Chief State School Officers convention in Palm Springs, Calif., in June, after JFK was chosen as one of seven schools in the nation to demonstrate significant change in their school through a planned approach to reform. To earn the honor, JFK proved itself to an evaluation firm during on-site visits.

A team of educators which has been involved in the program will present their results and inspire other schools to do the same at the National Reading Conference in Miami the in December. They are Pequignot, curriculum coordinator Mary O'Rourke and teachers Deb LaForce and Regan Galipeaut from JFK; and James Mosenthal, Marjorie Lipson and Jane Mekkelsen of UVM.

The three-year Reading Excellence federal grant that supported the project ended in June, and the Winooski school is now designated as a professional development site. UVM lecturer Ellen Thompson continues to work part time with the school as UVM acts on its long-term commitment to continue assisting JFK. Meanwhile, the UVM team is applying for a two- to five-year Reading First federal grant to build on the success.

Pequignot says, "We're not done. We need to get better."

### Continuing commitment, ongoing inspiration

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### [Spider Woman](#)

The ubiquitous plastic spiders spinning cottony Halloween webs have nothing to do with ecologist Linden Higgins' research, although the spiders she studies are comparable in size and flexibility, and are just as scary to arachnophobes.

### [Saving for the Future](#)

Sylvia Bugbee, a university archivist, is spinning the dial of the hulking green safe, trying to unlock the cantankerous mechanism.

### [INTERview: Dr. Julia Johnson](#)

*the view* recently interviewed Dr. Julia Johnson, who talked about recent findings raising questions about hormone replacement therapy.



"I personally have been working with JFK for nine years – they have really decided to make this a safe and engaging school with high expectations," says Mekkelsen. "They've worked really hard. The results are impressive. What they've accomplished at JFK makes it much more difficult for other schools to say they can't do the same thing. JFK is a diverse, high-needs school with few resources. And these kids are performing."

theview

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## INTERview: Dr. Julia Johnson

By Jen Nachbur



According to Dr. Julia Johnson, it will take about five years for all the data to be examined in the recently halted hormone replacement therapy study by the Women's Health Initiative. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

*the view spoke with Dr. Julia Johnson, associate professor of obstetrics/gynecology, who has conducted extensive research on hormone replacement therapy, to shed some light on some of the difficult choices confronting menopausal women. She recently published an article in Menopause: Journal of the North American Menopause Society on HRT and postmenopausal uterine bleeding. Following the halt of the Women's Health Initiative study of*

*estrogen and progesterone, Johnson – who also serves as director of the Division of Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility – and her OB/GYN colleagues sent letters to their patients to allay panic. The letter summarized the study's results and encouraged women to contact their health care providers to discuss whether or not they should continue with HRT.*

### **the view:Historically, why have physicians prescribed hormone replacement therapy for menopausal patients?**

DR. JOHNSON: The primary use of hormone replacement was always to relieve symptoms that can accompany natural menopause, such as hot flashes, sleep disturbance, vaginal dryness and urinary leakage. Hormone replacement is the only treatment that is effective at relieving these symptoms for most women, but the health provider can suggest other options to try first. Fortunately, the most bothersome symptom for most women – hot flashes – improves without any treatment just a few years after menopause.

The biggest question surrounding HRT was the value of long-term use for the heart and risk for the breast. The Women's Health Initiative was designed to answer questions about the benefits and risk of long-term use of hormone replacement after menopause.

### **What is the Women's Health Initiative Study and did UVM play a role?**

The study, begun in 1995, included 16,600 women given either hormone replacement (conjugated estrogen and medroxyprogesterone acetate or Prempro) or a placebo pill daily. They were followed for over five years for long-term health risks and benefits including breast cancer, heart disease, colon cancer and osteoporotic bone fractures. It was designed and overseen by the National Institutes of Health with the intent to end early if any of the concerning long-term risks of hormone use were found. Dr. Mary Cushman, associate professor of medicine, played a role in the aspect of the study that evaluated blood coagulation factors – which can help indicate cardiovascular disease risk.

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### **Saving for the Future**

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### **Winooski Resurgence**

Winooski's John F. Kennedy Elementary school is the kind of place whose charms don't always show up in standardized test reports. The school has 16 percent special needs students, and 12 percent need extra help with English.

### **Why was the study stopped early?**

The study was originally designed to end at 10 years or longer. However, at five years, for the first time, breast cancer risk was seen to increase on hormone replacement use. The study showed that 38 in 10,000 women developed breast cancer if they were on hormones, while 30 in 10,000 developed breast cancer if they were on the placebo. Although the number is small, it is a true increased risk that was not seen at the four-year point of the study.

### **What risks were associated with Prempro in the WHI study?**

The risks identified are related to blood clotting and cardiovascular health and breast cancer. The increased risk of heart attack or myocardial infarction was 7 in 10,000 with no increase in death due to a heart attack. Strokes and blood clots were also increased by a level of 8 in 10,000 with no increase in loss of life to these events. Breast cancer increased by 8 in 10,000 women with no increase in death due to cancer. The exact type of cardiovascular health problem and breast cancer for women on hormone replacement is being reviewed and will be published in the future.

### **What benefits were associated with that HRT in the study?**

Women on hormones had a decrease in colon cancer of 6 in 10,000 and a decrease in hip fractures of 5 in 10,000. There was no decrease in death due to these health problems. Other benefits, such as quality of life, brain function, skin effects and dental health will be examined and published in the future.

### **What HRT studies have you conducted at UVM?**

I've conducted a number of pharmaceutical trials that looked at a variety of treatments' effectiveness for controlling post-menopausal symptoms, as well as bleeding disorders related to HRT. Currently, I'm working on an NIH-funded study that is examining the relationship between cognitive function and estrogen therapy. I also am involved in contraceptive research.

### **Who should stop taking HRT?**

Women who have been taking hormones primarily to prevent heart disease and have been on the medication for more than four years should stop HRT. Women who have been taking hormone therapy for more than four years for prevention of osteoporosis should consider alternative therapies. Women who have been taking hormone replacement for hot flushes or other symptoms can consider alternatives, especially if they have been on HRT for more than four years. Early use of hormones does increase the risk of blood clotting, so women with a history of blood clotting or severe heart disease should not take hormone replacement. There is not an increased risk of breast cancer until after four years of use, so short term use for relief of symptoms is considered appropriate therapy. I encourage any woman who has questions about whether or not to stop HRT to talk to her health care provider to discuss her personal situation.

### **Where can we learn more about the WHI study?**

The best consumer web sites include comments written by scientists and physicians that are experts in the area of menopause. I recommend the [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#) and the [North American Menopause Society](#). Also, talk to your health care provider, and if further questions arise, set up a meeting with a reproductive endocrinologist, the menopausal experts, at the University of Vermont/Fletcher Allen Health Care at (802) 847-1400