

SCHOOLS

Campus update

John Morrison, an economics major from Greenwich has been named to the dean's list at Norwich University for the spring 2004 semester.

Springfield College has named **Timothy Rose** of Riverside to the dean's list for the fall 2004 term. He is a third year student majoring in Criminal Justice.

Among those named to Babson College's fall semester dean's list are Greenwich residents **Raphael A. Vasquez**, Class of 2006, and **Christian R. Luneburg**, Class of 2008.

Eliot Spencer of Riverside has been named to the Grinnell College Dean's List for the fall semester.

Among those named to Connecticut College's 2004 fall semester dean's list, all earning high honors were: **Kimberly T. Richards**, Class of 2007, from Cos Cob; **Owen W. Maloy**, Class of 2006, from Greenwich; and **Jenna L. Petok**, Class of 2008, from Riverside.

Hsien-Yi Chang, of Cos Cob, son of Tai-Chieh Chang and Shan-Shan Hsieh; and **Alexandra Brodman**, of Greenwich, daughter of Dr. Richard Ferris Brodman and Dr. Marny Ruth Cherkasky were named to the dean's list of Emory College for the 2004 fall semester.

Local residents on the Sacred Heart University fall 2004 dean's list include: **Ivonne Revetria**, of Cos Cob; **Samuel Bosch**, **Georjeana Kuehnel**, **Monica Loaiza**, **Jed LaLumiere**, all of Greenwich; and **Cecilia Corzo-Araoz** and **Nicolle Rodriguez**, both of Riverside.

The following students were among the Fordham University students named to the dean's list for the 2003/2004 academic year: **Erin E. Hynes** and **Matthew A. Kandel**, both of Cos Cob; and **Kelly O'Brien** and **Kaitlyn A. Braccio**, both of Greenwich.

Tufts University's fall 2004 dean's list included: **Leticia R. Frazao**, **Ilana M. Maoz**, **Brian R. Mommsen**, **Kathryn J. Singleton** and **Dennis L. Snopkowski**, all of Greenwich.

Andrew Steven Carter of Greenwich, the son of Steven Duncan Carter and Suzanne Carolyn Carter has been inducted into the Order of Gownsmen at the Sewanee.

Agatha Elaine Wells of Greenwich, a sophomore at Gettysburg College, has been placed on the Deans' Honor List for the fall 2004 term.

Ariana E. Horton of Cos Cob has accepted membership in Golden Key International Honor Society and was individually honored during a recent ceremony.

Dean Capparelle, of Cos Cob, has been named to the dean's list at Salve Regina University for the fall semester of the 2004-2005 academic year.

Families may celebrate the arrival of spring

Families are invited to visit Bush-Holley House to welcome springtime at the next Historic Fun for Families to be held Saturday, March 26, from 12 to 3. Historic Fun for Families is held on the last Saturday every other month and brings history to life through performance, art and other activities. This month's program celebrates the arrival of spring by inviting families to create two springtime crafts. Families may design their very own golden egg with paints, ribbons and glitter. They may also create a baby chick out of various craft materials. By choosing the order in which the crafts are made, you may decide which came first — the chicken or the egg! No reservations are required and families may drop in at any time from 12 to 3 during the program. The Historic Fun for Families is open to the public and is free for Historical Society family members and \$5 per person for nonmembers. The activities will take place in the Vanderbilt Education Center at Bush-Holley Historic Site, located at 39 Strickland Road in Cos Cob. For more information, call 869-6899 or visit www.hstg.org.

Visitors to the Historic Fun for Families event are also invited to visit the free slavery exhibition, *Intimate Strangers: Slavery and Freedom in Fairfield County 1700-1850*, located in the Hegarty Gallery in the visitor center at Bush-Holley Historic Site. This groundbreaking exhibition explores the topic of slavery in Fairfield County. This is one of the last chances to see the exhibition before it closes in April. Tours of the historic Bush-Holley House, a 1730s saltbox house that was home to two colonial Bush families and became the site of Connecticut's first art colony in the 1890s, are also available for a small fee.



The students at The Actor's Garage all took turns Monday practicing their commercials for a meeting with a New York City talent scout. Reading her lines at right is Janet Manina. Inset, Ann Gray Graf has been a professional actress for eight years and recently decided to open her own acting school. — Kristina Berlin photos

Kids learn confidence at the Actor's Garage

By Kristina Berlin, Staff Reporter

Acting classes aren't just for professional actors, according to Ann Gray Graf — they can teach valuable life skills such as self-confidence and public speaking, especially to still-forming young minds.

Ms. Graf, who is a professional actress herself, decided one day she could use her skills to help young children develop as people, and The Actor's Garage was born. The first class began in Manhasset, N.Y., one year ago and it quickly exploded into several more locations. Last year she began a class in Greenwich, her second location, and since then, six more have popped up with a total of 300 children involved.

Most of her new classes are the result of satisfied parents volunteering to take on the responsibility of new classes for other children. At the classes, children learn to avoid criticizing themselves and have a say in how the class is run. Most often, the class begins with a warm-up of charades, where the children take turns acting out personalities, such as mermaids or miming actions, such as playing in the ocean.

"I took everything I knew from acting school and everything I knew from being a working actress," she said.

At the end of each eight-week session, there is potential for real world success, when an agent specializing in children's talent comes from New York City to watch the children perform in front of a video in a commercial. The children practice the week before, reading their lines about how much they love Doritos off large poster boards.

Though not all the children are perfect readers, the most important thing is to convey feeling to the audience, Ms. Graf explained to the kids.

She added later that she doesn't like to emphasize career-oriented success to the children. The class is more for personal growth,

she said. And in order to achieve that personal growth she needs great teachers, which Ms. Graf said was the most challenging part of forming her business. The most challenging part for Ms. Graf was finding the appropriate teachers for her children. All of the teachers



are working actresses. Ms. Graf appreciates this because she believes the real life experience her teachers gain will benefit the children.

"Whatever they're doing they're bringing back to the pot," she said.

She also says her teachers have the "it" factor, the certain magic she sees when they interact with the children.

"I know it when I see them with the kids," she said.

The classes are kept small, no more than 12 for the 10 and older classes and no more than 10 for the under eight classes. With more individualized attention, the teachers are able

to help the children learn skills they will later use in job interview settings — standing tall, listening, making entrances and having a presence. Another acting exercise involves a customer and a salesperson. The customer asks to return an object without knowing what it is, and must guess what it is through clues the salesperson gives in normal conversation. The children observing always decide what the mystery object is, and if their suggestions need a little guidance, the teacher steers them. The teachers make a point of making the children feel that what they have to say is important, and if the kids are not interested in one particular acting exercise she will let them choose another, if it is equally educational.

"It's about knowing you have something to say," Ms. Graf said.

Another key aspect is using positive language. No one is allowed to put down anyone else, and the children learn to say constructive things. There is also no memorization involved. The message she sends to children is that they shouldn't be afraid of failure, and instead be inspired by the journey.

"What we do is character building," said Ms. Graf. "It's OK to get knocked down. You can't take it personally."

Some kids come back for the sessions again and again. In fact, 91 percent of her actors are repeat customers. There is also a summer camp that covers the same lessons into two weeks. Catching the children before they reach their awkward teen years is important to Ms. Graf, so that they are prepared for their adolescence. There comes a time when Ms. Graf will encourage the kids to use the skills they've learned and find other acting outlets, such as school plays.

"I tell them to experience life," she said.

For more information about The Actor's Garage, call 866-627-7221 or visit www.theactorsgarage.com. Greenwich classes take place at the Round Hill Community Center.

Central students straddle the equator

At the equator in Quito, Ecuador, Central Middle School middle and high school students gathered while wrapping up a nine-day excursion during February vacation to tour this South American capital and the Galapagos Islands, 800 kilometers off the city's west coast.

In addition to practicing their Spanish with trip leader Senor Cristofer Brown, students were able to experience firsthand the archipelago's rare and exotic wildlife — from the blue-footed booby and giant Galapagos tortoise to the Darwin finch, sea lions and varied species of iguanas and lizards.

Science teacher Sage Woodward was on board as another chaperone, enlightening the students on the incredible natural history of this volcanic island chain, made famous by Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* following his visit there in 1835. Snorkeling, white-water rafting and sightseeing through the pre-Columbian city of Quito and its environs were among the other trip highlights.

The educational tour, privately led by Sr. Brown, was operated by the American Council for International Studies, which provided local tour guides, travel logistics and the cruise boat for the island portion of the trip.



Under the guidance of Sr. Brown and Mr. Woodward, Central Middle School teachers, along with chaperones Marla Leamon of the Greenwich Rowing Club and Robin Truxel, CMS students and several graduates who are now Greenwich High School freshmen traveled to Ecuador. They are: top, left to right: Kelsey and Travis Dietz, Tucker Risman, Mark O'Connell, Max Friedlander, Joey Arico, Lloyd Layton, Jack Santoro. Second row: Jen Saper, Riley Johnson, Greenwich High School freshman Zach Roberts, CMS' Jessica More, Christine Barnum. Front row: Myra Gupta, Roni Rubins and Sydney Beaty, GHS freshmen; Ashley Hebert, Nicole Archibald, Quincy Goss, Christina Gestal, all from CMS. Not pictured is Sam Tannert, of GHS.