

Housatonic

COMMUNITY NEWS

June 2010

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Golden Hands



Photograph at top right: *Dunguaire Castle, Kinvara Bay, Galway, Ireland*

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the special
audio file
distributed
with this
newsletter!



Irish Heritage is Alive and Well at Housatonic

Most of us are curious about our heritage. We want to know more about the people who came before us, our ancestors. For Professor John Feeney, that interest, first discovered through reading a history book that he said detailed “two thousand years of history that I knew nothing about,” has led to a passion for his ancestral language—Gaelic.

Since 2009 he has been sharing his interest and expertise by teaching an Irish language course at Housatonic.

“Irish?” you ask.

Yes, Irish. And his two courses, *Irish 101* and *Irish 102* are in high demand.

Continued next page.

Reading about Irish history first led Prof. Feeney to study Irish on his own and later through Daltai na Gaeilgea, a cultural center in Fishkill, NY.

Today he has over fifteen years of experience teaching at community and cultural centers like the Gaelic American Club in Fairfield. He has also traveled in Ireland, Donegal particularly, where Prof. Feeney says, “A lot of people were surprised to hear an American speaking their language.

What is also surprising about John Feeney is that his academic and professional background is not in languages or cultural studies but science. He is a chemist who has worked in pharmaceuticals.

As he made the shift first from learning a new language to teaching it, he says that he had to abandon the “Here it is. Learn it” teaching style he describes as prevalent in the science courses he remembered from his own university days.

In his language courses Prof. Feeney is much more accommodating. He tries to alleviate the typical American fears about speaking a different language, the self-consciousness and uncertainty that comes with speaking an unfamiliar tongue out loud, for example.

“I do as much as possible to reduce stress, he says. “Humanities is more concerned about how a student learns. It’s good to learn in a variety of ways. Feeney says he uses a variety of activities in his teaching.

Drawing on his studies Prof. Feeney shares his appreciation of the great oral tradition of the Irish language and that many historians believe it was a language contemporary with the Roman Empire. At one time, he explains, as the Roman Empire expanded west bringing its alphabet and culture, ancient Celts felt that “To write the language was to cheapen it.” That historical resistance to writing along with the subsequent long political and cultural domination by the English largely suppressed Gaelic.

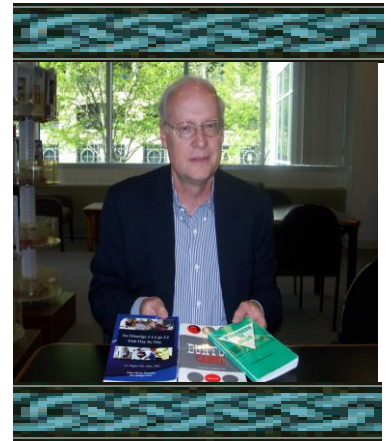
Prof. Feeney says that suppression lasted largely through the turn of the Twentieth Century, but the language enjoyed a resurgence in the 1920’s.

“You were considered uneducated and illiterate if you spoke Irish,” at one time, Prof. Feeney says, but now Americans want to learn Irish. Attitudes are changing. It has lost its negative connotation.”

Comparing Gaelic to Russian or German in terms of grammar and structure, Prof. Feeney admits, “Irish is not an easy language to learn.” One has to get the phonetics down and the rules of grammar are different than those in English. For example, verbs always precede their subjects—the same rule English speakers use to create questions. Further, there are no words for “yes” and “no” in Gaelic. There is no verb “to have,” so speakers use the preposition “at.” For example, instead of saying that “you have something,” speakers say “something is *at* you.”

Then, once having learned the language, there is the challenge of finding opportunities to use it.

John Feeney with texts from his courses



“I love teaching Irish. I’ve fallen in love with my Irish heritage.”

Prof. John Feeney

Prof. Feeney says the language Web sites online offer some opportunities to use his skills, as well as clubs and classes around Connecticut such as those offered by the Irish Gaelic Circle of Connecticut and the Irish American Community Center in East Haven.

Along with teaching the grammar and structure of the language, Prof. Feeney's Irish courses delve into historical and cultural concepts. There is much history that many do not know such as the history of Irish slaves in the Caribbean.

So far his classes have been full—30 students enrolled this semester. He would like to add an independent study level for those who want to go beyond the current sequence. There is no prerequisite for the course, “just an interest,” he says.

Future plans for the course include having students use Transparent Language software to make independent and phonetic studies easier, and eventually the new language lab in Beacon Hall will give students a chance for regular practice.

The benefits of learning a second language are that “They offer a big window to culture and are a great way to connect to other people—[there are the] same issues in life wherever you are.”

LISTEN & LEARN!

A special audio file is posted online along with this issue of *Housatonic Community News*.

English Words with Gaelic Origins

<i>Go leor</i>	galore
Smindirinni	smithereens
<i>baile an tí mhór</i>	Baltimore (town of the big house)

Greeting

Conas ata tu?	How are you?
Ta me gomaith.	I am well.

A Room of Their Own

A New Men's Center Opens in Beacon Hall

This spring in front of an enthusiastic group of faculty and students, President Anita Glinieski cut a ribbon officially opening Housatonic's Men's Center. Located on the third floor of Beacon Hall (Rooms 325-326 and the adjoining lounge) this new space will give male students a place to congregate, communicate and learn.

Like most college campuses, Housatonic's demographic is skewed towards women. Men on campus are a minority whose issues and concerns have the potential of being muted based on their sheer numbers and their hesitancy sometimes to come forward with problems.

The Men's Center offers a welcoming atmosphere where students' questions can be answered and male voices can be heard and validated.

Earl Graham, Assistant Director of Admissions and the Men's Center's director, says that in terms of recruiting and admissions, "It's a draw to say we have this kind of service on campus."

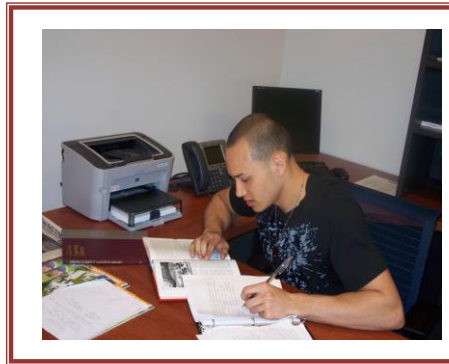
Right away the center has begun offering a variety of programs, first with a series of well-attended self-actualization workshops offered by adjunct faculty member, Craig Kelly. Informal "rap sessions" and more formal talks will continue to be a part of the center's regular roster of services.

Speaking of the calendar for next year, Earl Graham said, "We will be touching on men's health and relationships between the sexes." Mr. Graham also said that there is a potential for a film series, health screenings, and peer counselor training.

The Men's Center sponsored a trip to the Schomburg Theater in New York this spring. But the emphasis will remain on encouraging communication on themes universal to the male experience. Ever aware of campus diversity, Mr. Graham is quick to point out, "Students from all ages and backgrounds staff the center and its services are for everyone, not just men."

One staff member, Marcus Barrios, a second-semester General Studies major who operates the front desk, sees the center as fulfilling a need for male students who may be more hesitant than their female counterparts to ask for help. Marcus said "The center can help to put in male students' mindset that they don't have to be afraid to ask for help because that's how I used to be. They can just come to us and we can say, 'I know how you are feeling, *me personally*, I went through this last semester.'"

Speaking of his own experience, Marcus said, "When I started college, I was not too sure what to expect. I had to get my feet wet to see what college is about. I can reach out to [other males] and give them some pointers and hopefully this place will take off."



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Marcus Barrios,
Men's Center Staff

The Center's staff is collecting ideas from students who stop in to help generate ideas for rap sessions that will address a wide variety of student needs. Marcus, for one, is anxious to continue visits to four-year campuses so that they can think about their futures beyond Housatonic.

Described as a "solid student" by Mr. Graham, Marcus, who plans on transferring to UConn, says, "I would like for us to take more trips to UConn, Southern, Eastern and Western and come back and discuss ideas. I want [Housatonic] to be a steppingstone to go to a four year school."

Mr. Graham says that the center will work with Housatonic's Women's Center to develop programming as well as reach out to men centers on other campuses at Gateway Community College and Fairfield University.

The center will also build a lending library and is open to suggestions to add to its booklist as well as donations. Eventually additional sofas and artwork will give the center a "homey" appeal.



Marcus Berrios and Earl Graham, Men's Center Director

Housatonic Men's Center

Where: Beacon Hal, Rooms 325-326
and adjoining lounge

Hours: Monday –Thursday, 9am-6pm
Friday, 9am-4pm

Staff: Marcus Berrios, John Moales,
Sergio Escobar, Curtis Yates

HIGHER EDUCATION UPDATE

Low, Low Prices Win Over Community Colleges

Wal-Mart is partnering with American Public University (APU), an online institution, to provide subsidized college education for its workforce and, according to the company's website, grant workers "credit for their formal training and job experience" at the retailer. Through the Lifelong Learning Program, Wal-Mart associates may be able to earn 45 percent of the credit required for an associate's or bachelor's degree at APU.

The retailer says it will invest more than \$50 million over the next three years for tuition assistance and tools to help associates prepare for college-level work. Wal-Mart says the degrees will be "portable" and "follow associates whether they stay at Wal-Mart or wherever they choose to go next in life."

In a letter to U. S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announcing the "new educational initiative," Leslie Dach, Vice President of Corporate Affairs and Government Relations writes,

"As we worked to build this program we looked for a partner who shares our commitment to quality at affordable prices, as well as one who has the experience with adult learners, the academic credibility, and the technological sophistication to meet our associates' evolving needs. Given the fact that an overwhelming majority of associates told us that 'the ability to attend class at a time that fits my busy life' was very important to them, and that 72 percent of the 32,000 associates we surveyed said that they preferred an online university over other options, we sought a partner that could provide this flexibility."

Congratulations to Housatonic Community Members Nominated for Connecticut Higher Education Community Service Awards

The nominations acknowledge the unique contributions of individuals and organizations that create “ a vibrant culture of service through volunteerism.”

Special Award Nominees Leadership through Community Service and Personal Contributions

Edwena Chance, Professor of Humanities is recognized for her active role as Community Action Network (CAN) advisor. Inspiration for the organization emerged from an exercise in Professor Chance’s Public Speaking course, and she has worked diligently alongside students as they perform outreach in the community at a homeless shelter, high school and numerous charity drives. In addition, she has been instrumental in the shape and academic merit to CAN’s speaker series by connecting topics of local and global import to specific courses at Housatonic.

Janet Lanci, Professor of Human Services volunteers as a crisis therapist for several groups in Connecticut including the Valley Community Mental Health Crisis Team. The team meets community mental health needs in the wake of disasters and public health emergencies. Among her many contributions, Prof. Lanci has been instrumental in providing counseling and other mental health services for local response teams deployed to Haiti.

Samantha Manion, Professor of Criminal Justice, Coordinator of Criminal Justice Program volunteers as an advocate for individuals and families affected by autism spectrum disorder. In addition to fostering awareness and workshops on topics such as special education, special education law and self-advocacy for families of children with autism, Prof. Manion and her family have raised, trained and certified service dogs for the North Star Foundation. In addition, she has served as the Fairfield County region spokesperson for Autism Speaks and has been an avid fundraiser for autism causes.

Students Leadership through Initiative and Creativity in Community Service Participation

Kim Marwaha has volunteered in the Bridgeport Public Schools, with the Bubba Fund in Long Island, an organization that supports people with physical disabilities, and the HEROS project in Bridgeport. She has mentored adults and teens with disabilities, worked in a special needs classroom, and has made meaningful contributions by inspiring teens to be confident and productive.

Kirk Wesley, with fellow student Kenny Garcia, co-founded the Community Action Network (CAN) in 2008. In a few short years, CAN has fulfilled Kirk’s vision of becoming a student organization that enhances education through community service. Housatonic and the greater Bridgeport community have benefitted from CAN’s speaker series addressing social issues, community clean-up efforts, and presentations to encourage high school students to attend college. In 2009 Kirk participated in 100 percent of Can events and has demonstrated considerable leadership in seeing the organizations vision through.

Welcome!

New Community Member



Mitchel Ray joins the Business Office as Payroll Clerk.

Do you have a favorite piece of artwork on campus? Send a written appreciation of your favorite piece, accompanied by a photo if you like, to be published in an upcoming issue of the newsletter.

The wonderful sculpture that inspired *Golden Hands* hangs above main first floor stairwell in Beacon Hall.

Interpretation of:

Interface of Earth & Sky, 2008

Joy Wolke

Golden Hands

Smiling leaves dipped in gold
their crisp edges lucid and fresh
Emblems of glistening trinkets
Courtied by women and men alike

Intertwined and worn wooden playing jacks
Masquerading as roots
Relics that lack luster
Rebuffed unanimously

And so it ensues
One hand thirsty
For glittering droplets
Intoxicated by leaves' enchantment

The other bashful, barely biting the bark
Refusing to drink the seasoned fluid
That paddles
Through the trunk's veins

The consequence
Crusted clusters of cryptic blood
Tangled with auburn tears

Reposed above the roots

One tree
Severed
By two masked
Golden hands

Melisa Vargas
HCC Museum Volunteer

***Housatonic Community News* welcomes articles, photographs, announcements and feedback. The deadline for the October 2010 issue is September 15th.**

**Writing and
Photographs:**

Susan Monroe
John Feeney
Melisa Vargas

Web Services:

Susan Greene,
HCC Webmaster

Housatonic Community News is sponsored by the Organizational Culture Steering Committee: Anita Gliniecki, Maureen Cahill-Lambole, Edwin G. Chapman, Brenda Alexander, Tracey Chavis, Pamela Pirogue, Timothea L. Douglas, Susan Monroe, Kathleen Toedt