



What Don Fox
hath wrought

WAGNER COLLEGE FOX FAMILY FUND

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THE FOX FAMILY FUND AT WAGNER COLLEGE

How a special family philanthropy advances faculty research, teaches civic responsibility, and connects Wagner College to the community, on Staten Island and around the world



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For Donald M. Fox '64, with thanks

Dear Don,

This book, my esteemed friend, is a summary of what your generosity hath wrought.

It is a review of the nine service-research projects undertaken by Wagner College faculty and students between 2007 and 2009 that have been funded by the Fox Family Fund, which you created, to the tune of nearly \$100,000.

These nine projects have:

- Spanned four continents;
- Been led by twelve faculty members;
- Included hundreds of students, and
- Benefited thousands of community members.

And the work of the Fox Family Fund has only just begun.

In the current academic year, four additional faculty members are pursuing service-learning projects on Staten Island with resources you have provided to them. The progress to date of one of those projects, Rhoda Frumkin and Katia Gonzalez-Acquaro's literacy project at Lavelle Prep, is briefly summarized at the end of this report as a portent of things to come.

I want to congratulate you, Don, on what your generosity has already achieved — and what it will surely achieve in the future.

You have made Wagner College a more active,

more engaged member of not only the Staten Island community, but the global community.

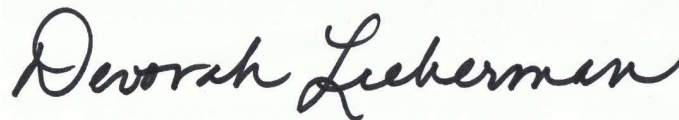
You have made a Wagner College education far more valuable to hundreds of students seeking a responsible way to put their degrees, skills and knowledge to use in the world around them. You have helped us graduate students who can call themselves “civic professionals.”

And you have enriched beyond measure the scholarly and civic engagement experiences of a dozen faculty members.

On behalf of all these beneficiaries of the Fox Family Fund, Don, I want to say: Thank you.

And I want to assure you that we will continue to do our very best to make you proud of what we do with the resources you provide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Devorah Lieberman". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Devorah" and last name "Lieberman" clearly legible.

Devorah Lieberman, Ph.D.
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Wagner College
December 2010



A resident of Saidpur, in northwestern Bangladesh, uses the new, clean-burning improved cook stove that has been built in her home, thanks to the Fox Family Fund.

Cleaner home air in Bangladesh

Mohammad Alauddin, Professor
Department of Chemistry & Physics
FOX FAMILY FUND GRANT, 2007-09

Few of the world's problems are as simple and inexpensive to solve as the health problems caused by indoor air pollution from open cook fires in the homes of the urban poor of Bangladesh. The solution of those problems requires just two things:

1. scientists with certain kinds of cultural and public-health know-how, like Wagner College chemistry professor Mohammad Alauddin, and
2. basic financial support, like that provided by a grant from the Fox Family Fund.

Particulates generated by open, unvented indoor cooking fires in Bangladesh are responsible for numerous, significant health problems among the poor in that country, including acute respiratory infections, asthma and pneumonia.

Simple, inexpensive improved cook stoves are widely known to significantly reduce the level of particulates from indoor fires. Built of bricks and mortar on site for about \$15 in materials, the stoves enclose the burning fires used to boil water and cook food and vent their smoke out of the homes using simple exhaust chimneys.

Wagner College chemistry professor Mohammad Alauddin has long been engaged in the application of modern science to the public health challenges of his native Bangladesh. Having earned his baccalaureate degree at the University of Dhaka, Alauddin continued his studies at the University of Kentucky, where he earned a Ph.D. in analytical chemistry in 1982. Now a full professor, Alauddin has been teaching at Wagner since 1984.

In the early 1990s, Alauddin was asked by the United Nations Development Programme to help government labs in Bangladesh establish chemical analysis procedures using advanced radioisotopes. He did two stints: the first in the summer of 1990, the second in 1993. During his second eight-week tour of duty, Alauddin was part of the first scientific analysis of rural well water that alerted public health officials to the presence of alarmingly high concentrations of arsenic. Ever since, Alauddin has regularly offered his scientific expertise — and that of his Wagner College students — to study some of the most pressing public health issues facing developing Bangladesh.



Professor Mohammad Alauddin, January 2008, in a village in central Bangladesh, where he was leading an Expanding Your Horizons class visit. (Photo by Kristen Solheim '08)

Indoor air pollution and improved cook stoves

Professor Alauddin's work on indoor air pollution and improved cook stoves, centered in a slum located in the city of Saidpur, in northwestern Bangladesh, started at the end of 2007. A target neighborhood for the project was identified, and filtered air pumps were placed in the homes where improved stoves would later be built. The idea was to measure the levels of indoor air pollution — especially particulates, lead and carbon monoxide — present in these homes before the new stoves were installed.

A small corps of women from the slum were trained in the method of constructing the stoves. Initially, they were installed in just 50 households. Follow-up indoor air pollution tests conducted in those homes in February 2008 showed significant improvements in air quality. With this success, another 30 stoves were installed that June, and 100 more were completed the following January, bringing the total to 180.

Levels of airborne lead found in test households during the first year were so high that Alauddin introduced blood-lead level monitoring of the children in the households with improved cook fires to determine if this very hazardous contamination was actually being reduced by the new stoves. Initial samples, taken by pin pricks, were gathered in January 2009 by Alauddin and Dr. Selim Ahmed of Bangladesh's Institute of Child and Mother Health. Further blood tests, indoor air pollution measurements,

and household health surveys to measure the overall effect of the project were taken in August 2009 by Alauddin and Wagner College student Taylor Wheaton, who had become Alauddin's research assistant in the project.

All the while, Alauddin was explaining the Saidpur cook stove project to successive groups of Wagner College students who traveled with him to Bangladesh as part of the college's Expanding Your Horizons Study Abroad program, which links semester-long classroom courses with short overseas study trips. In January 2008, 6 students studied with Professor Alauddin in Bangladesh; the following year, 7 students traveled with him to his native country.

Dissemination

Professor Alauddin has disseminated information about the study of indoor air pollution and the installation of improved cook stoves through several media.

On November 20, 2007, in the run up to the project's initiation, Alauddin was invited to present a scholarly paper on "Indoor Air Pollution and its Impact on Child and Mother Health" at the 3rd National Congress of Pulmonology Forum in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Alauddin and several colleagues made four presentations in May 2008 to the 2nd International Congress As2008, "Arsenic, from Nature to



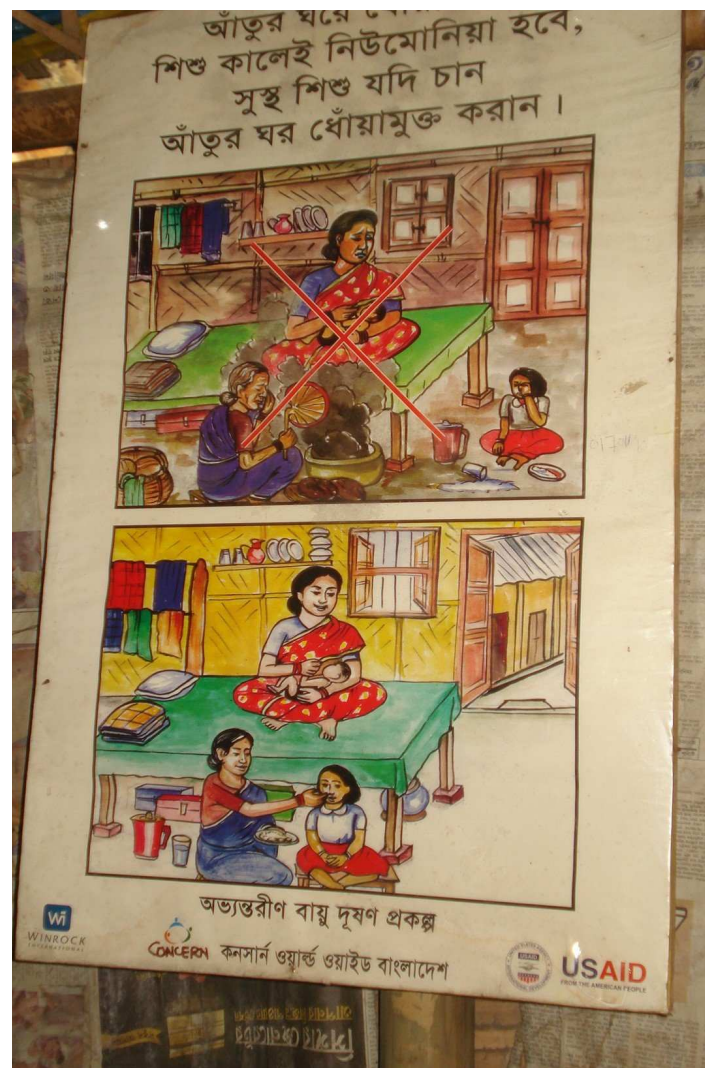
Wagner College student and research assistant Taylor Wheaton visits a home in Saidpur, Bangladesh, where a Fox Family Fund improved cook stove has been installed.

Humans,” in Valencia, Spain:

- M. Alauddin, M. Fiasconaro, S. Alauddin, A. Hussam, M. Bhattacharjee, S. Sultana, A.B.M. Zakaria and M. Jakariya, “Chemical equilibrium modeling of arsenic and other trace elements in deep aquifer water from two regions in Bangladesh.”
- S. Ahmed, P. LaPorte, J. E. Spallholz, M. Alauddin, M. Bhattacharjee, S. Sultana, A.B.M. Zakaria, “Arsenic and selenium concentrations in hair from ten geographic regions of Bangladesh.”
- M. Alauddin, M. Bhattacharjee, A.B.M. Zakaria, M. Rahman and M.S.I. Seraji, “Approaches for sustainable mitigation of arsenic calamity in Bangladesh: search for safe drinking water.”
- M. Alauddin chaired Session 10A, “Soil Remediation.”

Finally, Alauddin and Taylor Wheaton were co-authors with A.B.M. Zakaria, Mustafiza Hossain and Lutfiyah Ahmed of an article, “Indoor Air Pollution Assessment in Urban Slum and Rural Households in Bangladesh: Our 6 Years of Experience,” published in the Partnership for Clean Indoor Air Bulletin 16 (July 2008).

RIGHT COLUMN: A poster from the United States Agency for International Development (US-AID) pictorially promotes the health value of eliminating indoor air pollution with improved cook stoves.





Wagner College students walking from the Kware center to Gataka, about 4 kilometers away, during an Expanding Your Horizons study trip to Kenya in January 2010.

'The Center,' Ongata Rongai, Kenya

Steve Snow, Associate Professor
Department of Government & Politics
FOX FAMILY FUND GRANT, 2007-09

In the Kware slum of Ongata Rongai, on the southernmost edge of metropolitan Nairobi, a voluntary organization called Christian Women's Work of Charity has been operating "The Center" since 1994 — a multipurpose facility providing the community with a school for local AIDS orphans and vulnerable children, a feeding program for the other school children living in Kware, and an AIDS testing and counseling center. The success of the Kware Center led more recently to the opening of a second CWWC school in the nearby Gataka slum.

The need for both centers is driven by the AIDS epidemic in Africa; fully half of the residents Gataka, for example, are infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

This is where Professor Steve Snow and his students have gone for the last three winter breaks, as part of the Expanding Your Horizons Study Abroad program, to work with and learn among the people served by the CWWC. (Both Kware and Gataka, by the way, are very safe, friendly areas. Students have

excellent placements, a safe and comfortable place to stay, and warm and gracious hosts who cook superb food.)

In early 2008, the first year of the Fox Family Fund grant, Dr. Snow and two students arranged for the construction at the Gataka School of a new kitchen, consisting of a rain-tight, tin-roofed shelter with an industrial gas stove and a sturdy, secure stone building in which to house the school's livestock animals. They also bought 300 chicks and the poultry feed needed to raise them for eggs and meat. Later that year, another structure was built to house the goats separately from the chickens.

In late 2008 and early 2009, the Fox Fund made it possible for Dr. Snow and three of his students to help the CWWC create a modern office environment at the Kware Center. The students helped the organization's leaders figure out the kind of equipment that would help them the most, then get it up and running in the office.

Dr. Snow has structured the Fox Fund work at the



Wagner College student Prerna Bhatia with school girls who had come to the Kware Center for the feeding program. They had no other way of getting food. (January 2010)

Kware and Gataka centers around a course entitled “Politics and Service Abroad: Kenya.” Snow and a group of about eight students travel to Nairobi each winter break, where they work at one of the CWWC centers. When they return to Grymes Hill, classroom coursework focusing on the AIDS crisis in Africa helps Snow’s students analyze and understand their experience in a broader context. Just to provide some examples, last spring’s reading list included the books “Black Death” by Susan Hunter, “I Laugh So I Won’t Cry: Kenya’s Women Tell the Story of Their Lives” by Helena Halperin, “Breath of Kenya” by Charles Herrick, and “Local Women, Global Science: Fighting AIDS in Kenya” by Karen M. Booth.

What is the experience like for the students who go to Kenya?

“At first, when people asked me, I couldn’t tell them, I was so overwhelmed,” said Melanie Valencia, a sophomore from Ecuador, at a presentation last spring. “It’s an opportunity to do something — to understand the actual needs of poverty.”

“It really does change your life, even though you don’t necessarily expect it to,” said sophomore Alexandra Videll of Laurel, Maryland. “You think you know what you’re going to be seeing — and then you see it, and it’s completely different. I know that I’m a different person than I was before I left.”

Dissemination

In 2008, Steve Snow presented a paper on the Gataka Kitchen project, entitled “Service Learning in the Third World: Lessons and Challenges,” at the annual conferences of the Midwest Political Science Association and the New York State Political Science Association.

With students Chelsea Dunbar and Kathryn Wentzler, Dr. Snow presented a paper on the Gataka Kitchen project at the 8th International Research Conference on Service Learning & Community Engagement, held at Tulane University in October 2008.

This spring, students Melanie Valencia and Alex Videll gave an oral presentation on Dr. Snow’s Kenya class to a seminar about Wagner College’s Expanding Your Horizons program. A video recording of their presentation can be found on our website. (<http://www.wagner.edu/media/node/546>)

This fall, Dr. Snow spoke for a Wagner College Residence Life program, “The Last Lecture,” on the AIDS crisis in Africa, mining real-world examples from the experiences he and his students had acquired in Ongata Rongai.



Wagner College nursing students show off their certificates of appreciation from the African Refuge program in Staten Island, where they served in a Fox Family Fund program.

African Refuge Health Promotion Program

Assistant professors Annemarie Dowling-Castronovo & Patricia Tooker, and
Adjunct professor Cheryl Nadeau, Evelyn L. Spiro School of Nursing
FOX FAMILY FUND GRANT, 2008-10

The poor tend to bear a disproportionate burden of illness and premature death. Why? The preventive screenings, immunizations, mental health services, and health education and counseling that are routine for others are unknown to those living in poverty. Without regular access to primary care physicians, minor health problems escalate into emergency room crises. And the most significant barrier between the poor and adequate health care — especially among poor immigrants — is the lack of health insurance; almost half of all American immigrants are uninsured, nearly three times the rate of native-born Americans.

Those were the factors that drove faculty members from Wagner College's Evelyn L. Spiro School of Nursing to join forces with African Refuge, a nonprofit group that serves Staten Island's large Liberian refugee community. Together, they formed the Partnership In Community Health, or PICH, with the generous support of the Fox Family Fund.

Under the clinical supervision of Professor Cheryl Nadeau, the seven senior nursing students enrolled for

the Fall 2008 semester in NR 472, Community Health Nursing, began providing weekly health education activities and screenings at African Refuge and organized monthly health fairs.

In the Spring 2009 semester, 10 students enrolled in NR 472 staffed the PICH program. An assessment of the students' experience from the previous semester helped identify two specific health subjects to target that were especially important to Staten Island's Liberian refugee community: nutrition (and its connection to diabetes) and hypertension. Separate health education events were organized around both of these topics.

An assessment of the first year's activities led to a new focus in the second year on helping clients at African Refuge learn how to navigate the health care system for themselves. Skills included making and keeping clinic appointments, learning about medical referrals and prescriptions, and adhering to doctors' instructions for the long-term use of medications to treat ongoing conditions like hypertension.



Wagner College nursing students staff a nutrition clinic at the African Refuge.

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Dissemination

Patricia Tooker, Annemarie Dowling-Castronovo and Cheryl Nadeau wrote a chapter, "African Refuge: Partnership in Community Health," that was included in a book, "Giving Through Teaching: How Nurse Educators are Changing the World," edited by J.J. Fitzpatrick, T.D. Aiken and C. Schultz for the National League of Nursing Foundation and published by the Springer Publishing Company, New York, 2010.



Wagner College students, Empowerment Zone members, and students and teachers from P.S. 57 pose for a group photo after work on the Park Hill Unity Garden, April 2008

Growing leaders: The Park Hill Unity Garden

Patricia Moynagh, Assistant Professor, Department of Government & Politics
Lori Weintrob, Assistant Professor, Department of History
FOX FAMILY FUND GRANT, 2007-08

In 2007, political science professor Patricia Moynagh and history professor Lori Weintrob were preparing lessons for the two courses in their Intermediate Learning Community, “Leadership & Human Rights.” The goal of the ILC was to teach students about social responsibility and citizen leadership by studying the examples of transformative leaders like South Africa’s Nelson Mandela, who organized the resistance that eventually toppled the apartheid regime.

The big question facing Moynagh and Weintrob, however, was not how to structure their lessons or write their exams; it was how to bring the theory learned from textbook reading and classroom lectures and apply it in actual, real-world community practice — in other words, how to help Wagner College students apply real leadership principles by performing service in a real community.

Nelson Mandela provided the answer.

In his autobiography, “Long Walk to Freedom,” Mandela wrote about the garden he was allowed to

keep while in prison on Robben Island:

A garden was one of the few things in prison that one could control. To plant a seed, watch it grow, to tend it and then harvest it, offered a simple but enduring satisfaction. The sense of being the custodian of this small patch of earth offered a small taste of freedom.

In some ways, I saw the garden as a metaphor for certain aspects of my life. *A leader must also tend his garden*; he, too, plants seeds, and then watches, cultivates, and harvests the result. Like the gardener, a leader must take responsibility for what he cultivates; he must mind his work, try to repel enemies, preserve what can be preserved, and eliminate what cannot succeed.

This passage provided the inspiration for the community service component conceived by professors Moynagh and Weintrob for their ILC: Their students would work with a community group and a public school in the Park Hill public housing project, just down the road from Wagner College, to plant a community garden.

A grant from the Fox Family Fund would pay for the landscaping materials and equipment needed for



Wagner College student Dave Hammill, our resident gardener, watches over the greenhouse on top of Megerle Science Building, December 2008.

the project. The grant went twice as far with a matching contribution from Conrad Schweizer Nurseries of Staten Island.

What happened?

The project was accomplished in two stages.

Stage One was a Community Clean Up Weekend, conducted over the weekend of April 5 and 6, 2008. Working with a Park Hill community organization called the Empowerment Zone, Wagner College students, community youth and other Park Hill residents worked together to clean up the general area around the apartment buildings on Park Hill Avenue. The afternoon of April 5 was dedicated to picking up trash and raking leaves at one of the massive high-rise apartment blocks, 140 Park Hill Avenue. The following day, the clean up continued at the adjacent building, 185 Park Hill Avenue. The clean up helped bring the Park Hill community together. It was also the first opportunity for members of the community, leaders of the Empowerment Zone and Wagner College students to work together, cementing the relationship that would continue throughout the beautification project.

Stage Two was the planting of what was called the Park Hill Unity Gardens. Saturday, April 26 marked the first planting of the Unity Gardens in the small, inner-city neighborhood that so many see when they

look out their campus windows toward Manhattan. The first day of planting was hosted by the Wagner students in conjunction with Christida Howard and Patricia Lockhart, teachers at P.S. 57. Howard and Lockhart were able to get a group of young students together to help out with the planting effort, and together the group planted flowers, herbs and a large tree in front of one of the apartment buildings. Wagner students also came prepared with crayons and coloring supplies for the Park Hill kids, who exercised their artistic abilities along with tending the soil. After two hours of hard work, the planting was finished and the children were able to take their plants and art work home. An excellent connection was made and everyone was enriched by the first successful planting in Park Hill.

Leftover Fox Fund money was used the following spring to buy additional art supplies for three groups of Wagner students who worked with the fourth grade classes at P.S. 57 to study Staten Island history. On five successive Friday mornings in April 2009, Wagner College students led their classes; then, during the sixth week, they attended a dramatic performance on Staten Island history staged by the fourth graders, based on the material the Wagner College students had taught.



Park Hill community members and Wagner College students work together to plant the Unity Gardens in April 2008.

Were there any other outcomes?

There were two unexpected outcomes that arose from the Park Hill Unity Gardens project.

The first was a visit to the Wagner College greenhouse by a fifth-grade class from P.S. 57. There in the enclosed garden on the roof of Megerle Science Building, Wagner's resident student gardener Dave Hamill taught the students from Park Hill the basics of planting a flower and helping it grow. Hammill gave a tour of the greenhouse and answered questions about the different species of plants that he was growing. Then the kids painted their own flowerpots, and each one planted either a marigold or a pansy seed in their pots.

The second unexpected outcome of the Unity Garden project was a second grant to expand the Unity Gardens — a grant secured by the Wagner College students themselves. The Mollie Parnis "Dress up Your Neighborhood" grant is a \$1,000 award given annually by the Citizens Committee for New York to 12 different grassroots organizations to fund community-building beautification projects.

Dissemination

A pair of pieces in the media helped pass the word along about the work of Wagner College students in Park Hill that was being made possible by the Fox Family Fund grant to professors Moynagh and Weintrob. The first was an April 2008 story on New York 1, the New York City cable news television station, titled, "College Students, Locals Clean Up Park Hill." A second story, published the following spring in the Staten Island Advance, focused on the short history course taught at P.S. 57 by Wagner College students.

The Wagner College students involved in the Park Hill project have written up three different illustrated presentations of their own — "Unity Gardens of Park Hill," "Leadership," and "Community Garden" — which have been posted online on Wagnerpedia, Wagner College's own version of Wikipedia.

Professor Lori Weintrob will present a scholarly paper on the Park Hill Unity Gardens project to a panel at the American Historical Association conference in January 2011.



Faculty, students and community partners pose for a group photo at the Civic Realty Symposium in April 2008, the concluding event of the inaugural Civic Realty course.

Civic Realty

Mary LoRe, Associate Professor, Finance
Department of Business Administration
FOX FAMILY FUND GRANT, 2007-09

The subprime mortgage crisis was a long time developing, but by the summer of 2007, Wagner College finance professor Mary LoRe could tell that it would soon become one of the defining features of the national economy — yet the college had no courses that explored how the real estate and mortgage markets actually worked.

In a conversation about the crisis with Professor LoRe, the Wagner College Student Government Association president suggested holding a conference where students could learn about the potential profits and pitfalls of home buying and investing in the real estate market.

LoRe took the student leader's idea a step farther: She applied for a grant from the Fox Family Fund to help her develop a whole course on realty markets and the mortgage industry.

The class, BU-291 Real Estate Investments, first offered in the Spring 2008 semester, was set up to provide students with equal amounts of time in the classroom and in the field, shadowing real-world real

estate agents who belonged to the Staten Island Board of Realtors. The various agents and their related agencies focused on several aspects of the real estate industry — residential, commercial brokers, and developers.

“They [the students] are the adults of tomorrow,” said SIBOR President Dawn Carpenter, “and they need to understand what real estate is about, especially because of what we are going through now.”

“You learn more when the market is like this and the houses aren't selling themselves,” said Jill Gannon of Cangiano Estates, one of the businesses that partnered with Wagner for LoRe's course.

The class concluded with a Civic Realty Symposium, developed by the students and their professional partners, presenting what they had learned about the real estate business, the mortgage market, and their impact on the community.

When the course was offered again a year later, in the Spring 2009 semester, enrollment rocketed from 6 students to 24.



Wagner College art history professor Sarah Scott

Sennacherib's 'Palace without Rival'

Sarah Scott, Assistant Professor, Art History
Department of Art and Art History
FOX FAMILY FUND GRANT, 2007-09

Almost 3,000 years ago, King Sennacherib of Assyria built a palace whose grandeur expressed the might of his tremendous empire. Located in today's northwestern Iraq, the "Palace Without Rival" stretched the length of two football fields. Marble slabs lined its interior, carved from top to bottom with scenes of military conquests, lion hunts and domestic accomplishments like stone quarrying.

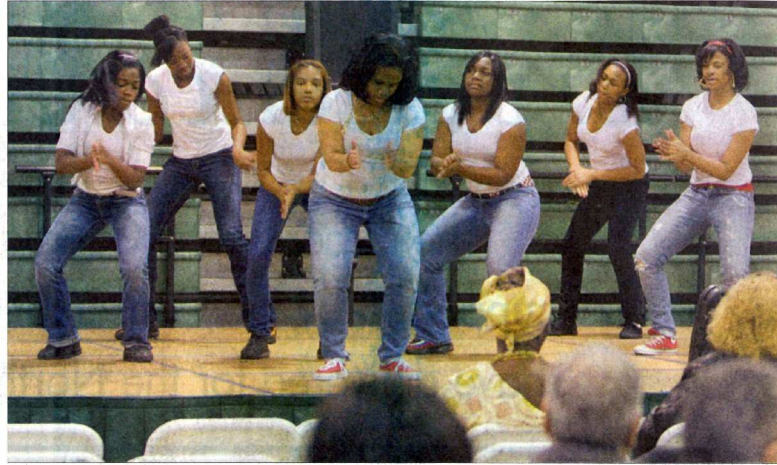
Today, however, the site is almost inaccessible, and the palace's treasures have been repeatedly looted, with pieces scattered in museums and private collections throughout the world.

Through the efforts of a Wagner College professor and the miracles of computer imaging technology, however, we will one day again know what it was like to stand in those grand halls.

Sarah Scott, assistant professor of art history at Wagner College since 2007, has partnered with scholars in archaeology and computer technology from SUNY Buffalo in a multi-year, multi-million-dollar effort to digitally reconstruct the Palace Without Rival.

With a grant from the Fox Family Fund, she began the project in 2008 at London's British Museum, which holds some fine examples of the palace's bas-relief sculpture. Scott worked with specialists to create minutely detailed digital scans of these fragments — the first pieces of this vast puzzle. Solving it and making it accessible, she hopes, will open students' and scholars' eyes to the significance of these cultural treasures from the "cradle of civilization."

In the Spring 2009 semester, she taught a special art history course on Assyrian art and Sennacherib's palace. As part of the course, Scott and her students created a gallery exhibition of several panels from the palace for display in the Horrmann Library's Spotlight Gallery. The exhibition included four tremendous wall-sized photos and several smaller images of carved stone panels from Sennacherib's palace, plus seven interpretive essays by Scott's students on the Palace Without Rival, Assyrian history and society, and background on the inscriptions and imagery found in the palace's panels.



STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE PHOTOS/HILTON FLORES

Above, the Port Richmond Steppers, from Port Richmond High School, perform at the "Celebrate Diversity" festival in the Spiro Center at Wagner College. At left, Native American Robert Boldeagle of the Red Storm Drum and Dance Troupe gyrates during the seventh annual event.

A world of diversity is celebrated at Wagner College

Festival featuring ethnic entertainment and food attracts thousands to Grymes Hill campus

By DEBORAH YOUNG
STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

Within the space of Wagner College's Spiro Center yesterday, the entire globe was vibrating. Men in bright patterned Ghanaian kente cloth stepped in time with feather-clad Native American drummers, in an impromptu dance that broke out alongside the booth displaying the handiwork of Russian artisans.

On a stage nearby, an Egyptian belly dancer held a sword aloft overhead, while the audience watched, mesmerized by the sensual movements of her hips.

It was all part of the seventh annual "Celebrate Diversity" festival at the Grymes Hill campus — an event that drew thousands and featured ethnic food, entertainment, children's crafts and countless opportunities for learning about ourselves and each other.

"We are trying to learn from our interactions," said Mike Bayer, of the Center for Interpersonal Development and a coordinator of the Mosaic Coalition. "The journey getting here is where the magic really lies."

The Mosaic Coalition — a joint project of Wagner College and the Center for Interpersonal Development — was formed in the wake of the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, in an effort to transform fear and misunderstanding into empathy and respect, said Susan Rosenberg, the col-

lege's Mosaic Coalition's leader.

All year, meetings are held where the diverse groups that make up Staten Island make relationships, discussing issues facing their communities and in the borough at large.

GROUPS REPRESENTED

"A lot of what is happening here comes as a result of the relationships that have been made over time," she said.

Behind her, on the wall, a sign read: "Normal is a setting on a washing machine: Embrace Diversity." Each year, different groups are selected to be represented at the celebration, where they share dance and songs, arts and crafts, food and other aspects of their culture. Featured yesterday, were our

Egyptian, Ghanaian, Native American, Nigerian, Russian and Tunisian neighbors.

"We want to be part of the Staten Island community and this has opened up tremendous opportunities for us," said Sam Owusu-Sekyere, who estimated at least 1,000 people from the West African nation live in the borough, though oftentimes outsiders just assume they're from Liberia or Sierra Leone, which have more populous communities here.

Behind him, a weaver worked on a traditional loom, pedaling with his feet and making clickity clack sounds with the wood. Growing longer with each movement was a strip of ceremonial, 4-inch-wide kente cloth, a patterned fabric that has been adopted by African Americans of all backgrounds, but originated thou-

sands of years ago in Ghana, and is rich with cultural significance and history, said Owusu-Sekyere.

The saturated yellows, greens, red and black of the kente cloth played off the cool toned palates of Russian performers, who shared dances representing different parts of that vast country.

"We are so diverse even within the community, and we want to know more about who is around us," said Kelly Silletto, who manned the Russian booth in the afternoon. For her, who has an Italian father and a mother with Russian roots, not unlike so many Americans of mixed lineage, reclaiming her heritage, she said, has become a nourishing, personal quest.

Deborah Young is a news reporter for the Advance. She may be reached at young@siadvance.com.



Anita Lugina, 5, of Great Kills wears traditional Russian clothing.

Wagner College's Celebrate Diversity festival was one of the prime inspirations for the Education Department's Study Circles project, supported by the Fox Family Fund.

Study circles: Dialogues about diverse cultures

Assistant professors Rhoda Frumkin & Katia Gonzalez-Acquaro, and
Administrative Assistant Susan Rosenberg, Department of Education
FOX FAMILY FUND GRANT, 2007-09

Lots of education schools train young people to enter the teaching profession.

Wagner College, however, shoots higher: In all four of our professional programs, we seek to provide our students with a liberal education as well as professional competency.

And, within the Wagner Plan for the Practical Liberal Arts, we also seek to train professionals who have a clear sense of civic responsibility.

It is within this context that three members of our Education Department sought a Fox Family Fund grant to help them craft a new element in the curriculum for training responsible civic educators.

They called this new element “study circles.”

The idea: All of the senior education majors enrolled in the department’s capstone course would be divided up into 10 study circles. Each circle would focus on a particular topic related to cultural diversity — Native American schools, for instance, teaching students with special needs, or acknowledging sexual identity — and connect with elements of the local

community through established Staten Island experts and their organizations. Based on those interactions, the study circles would create learning and informational materials to post on the Wagner College Wagnerpedia site, letting others benefit from what they had learned. They would also create learning-related activities for Wagner’s annual Celebrate Diversity festival, to provide maximum benefit for others from the program.

And that’s exactly what happened. Beginning in the Fall 2008 semester, the 30 students enrolled in ED 580 divided into 10 study circles. After discussing the objectives of the circles, making sure they knew what they were supposed to do, the students were given a test on their knowledge and attitudes about diversity. Then they chose their own topics, began discussing curriculum issues, and started the process of identifying people and organizations in the community who could help them understand how education affected those people.

Though each year’s study circles will undoubtedly

choose different topics, depending on the circles' composition and the issues of the day, the 10 topics chosen in that first year are a good representation of the breadth of inquiry stimulated by this program:

1. Teaching Profession and the Media
2. Ethnicity & Race: Children in Need
3. Multicultural Education, Community Involvement, and Civic Engagement
4. Communities in Staten Island: Current Needs
5. Exceptionalities/Differentiation, Community Needs — guest speakers from Bloomingdale Family Program Operation Head Start
6. Hate Crime — students attended event with guest speakers from NYPD
7. Language, Gender and Religion
8. Schools Around the World: The Class/Visualization Activity
9. LGBTQ and Schools — guest speakers from Wagner “Safe Zone” program
10. Schools Around the World — guest speakers from Native American community

Curriculum materials developed by the study circles were uploaded each spring to Wagnerpedia. The following fall, when new study circles were formed, the previous years' Wagnerpedia materials were archived, and the process started over. Beginning this year, senior capstone students will be creating WikiBooks — curriculum publications that can be

edited and supplemented by others for the mutual benefit of the educational community.

In addition to participating in the annual Celebrate Diversity festival with their community partners, and developing diversity curriculum materials for the Wagnerpedia service on the Wagner College website, a particularly powerful bond was established between senior capstone students and one particular community group: Red Storm, a Native American drum and dance group based on Staten Island that seeks to preserve First Nation culture and help others learn more about it. The year after this Fox Family Fund grant was expended, inspired by the continuing relationship with Red Storm, senior capstone students, faculty members and staff traveled to Crow Agency, Montana, the reservation of the Apsáalooke Nation, to see for themselves how schools were operated by native peoples in the United States. When they returned, Red Storm members gave each study circle participant an arrow with a special token of esteem, each one unique to the character of the individual receiving it. It was a very moving ceremony for everyone involved in the end-of-semester presentation this May.

Dissemination

Three presentations were made to scholarly conferences as a result of this project:

A conference workshop was presented at the Campus Engage International Conference 2009 in Dublin, Ireland, “The Use of Study Circles as a Teaching Tool to Enhance Service Learning, Students’ Civic Engagement, and Community Partnerships: A Collaborative Approach.” (June 5, 2009)

A proposal for a conference presentation was accepted as a roundtable discussion at Improving University Teaching 34th Annual Conference — Navigating Innovations in Teaching and Learning, in Vancouver, B.C. The presentation, given on July 16, 2009, was titled, “Study Circles: An Opportunity for Dialogue for Increasing Knowledge about Diverse Cultures.” Two students, Lauren Pollock and Rachel Dunn, accompanied Education Department faculty and staff to this presentation.

“Getting the opportunity to go to a professional conference was an incredible experience,” Pollock said. “I learned so much about what other colleges and universities around the globe are doing, and I came back with lots of wonderful ideas for future papers and projects. Not only that, but the location could not have been more ideal. Vancouver is a gorgeous city with so much to offer, and I will never forget my time there.”

“Having the opportunity to travel to Vancouver allowed me to learn new techniques and strategies to use throughout my future as a teacher,” said Dunn. “Conversing with educators at the Improving University Teaching Convention gave me a behind-the-scenes perspective of how our college professors view their students and their various learning abilities, as well as their methodology towards teaching today’s college student.”

Finally, in November 2009, Rhoda Frumkin, Katia Gonzalez-Acquaro and Susan Rosenberg made a workshop presentation at the 3rd International Symposium on Service Learning in Athens, Greece. The presentation was entitled, “Study Circles & Service Learning: Lesson Learned.”

Sexuality education in schools

Katia Gonzalez-Acquaro, Assistant Professor
Department of Education
FOX FAMILY FUND GRANT, 2008-09

The development of sexuality education materials, especially for students with developmental disabilities, has long been the special expertise of Wagner College education professor Katia Gonzalez-Acquaro. Her doctoral dissertation at Columbia University Teachers College studied the impact that “myths and erroneous assumptions about the sexuality of individuals with mental retardation have had ... on their opportunities for full community integration.”

Her 2008 proposal for a Fox Family Fund grant-supported study, then, was a very natural extension of her earlier inquiry. She proposed to examine the effectiveness of an “online learning community” on teachers’ knowledge, attitude, and self-efficacy beliefs — that is, their confidence in their professional ability to have an impact — concerning sexuality education for students with and without disabilities.

Participating with her in this enterprise would be the 14 students enrolled for the Spring 2009 semester in ED 600, our graduate course in curriculum development. These students, with the support of two paid

graduate assistants, would conduct research on sexuality education and create an informational website containing curriculum materials to assist in teaching about sexuality.

In preparation for the Spring 2009 semester, Professor Gonzalez-Acquaro selected a Web host and had a software package adapted to facilitate in presenting the curriculum materials that would later be developed. She also selected her graduate assistants, who conducted an extensive literature review of up-to-date resources for the ED 600 students to use the following semester. An advertisement, mailed to sexuality educators across the country using a U.S. Department of Education database, invited participation in the study that would be conducted a few months later.

In the spring, while Gonzalez-Acquaro’s ED 600 students were developing their curriculum materials, the professor surveyed the 68 outside educators who had been chosen for the study to see how prepared they were initially to teach sex education, especially to

students with intellectual disabilities who were embedded in general education classes. After the initial test, those 68 teachers were randomly divided into three groups:

1. those who would be exposed to the new training materials that our ED 600 students would be posting online;
2. those who, in addition to being exposed to the materials, would also be guided by Gonzalez-Acquaro in some exercises designed to help them reflect on what they had learned, and
3. a control group of teachers exposed to neither the materials nor the reflective exercises.

A test given at the end of the semester to the 68 participants showed very positive results: Teachers in both of the first two groups — those exposed to the ED 600 materials, and those also given the reflective exercises — scored significantly higher compared to the control group on tests of knowledge, attitudes, and confidence in their own ability to teach sexuality to those with intellectual disabilities. And teachers in the second group — those with access to the ED 600-generated materials who were also guided through a reflective process — scored the highest of all three groups.

As a result, the Education Department has continued to include sexuality education as one of the focus subjects of the ED 600 graduate course in

curriculum development. According to Gonzalez-Acquaro, future students will continue to develop the material created by their predecessors, and a family information section will be added to the course.

Dissemination

Several journal articles, conference presentations and Web-based training sessions were developed to share the results of this grant program:

While considering whether to apply for a Fox Family Fund grant, Professor Gonzalez-Acquaro was invited to speak at a December 2007 colloquium sponsored by the Center for Developmental Neuroscience and Developmental Disabilities at the College of Staten Island. The subject: “Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities and Sexuality Education: An Online Approach to the Training of Educators.”

In January 2008, Professor Gonzalez-Acquaro presented a paper, “Sexuality Education in an Inclusive Setting: Results of an Online Workshop for General and Special Education Teachers,” at the 4th Annual Hawaii International Conference on Education in Honolulu, Hawaii.

An online journal, *Current Issues in Education* (Vol. 11, No. 9), published Professor Gonzalez-Acquaro’s article, “Teacher Training, Sexuality Education, and Intellectual Disabilities: An Online

Workshop.” [<http://cie.ed.asu.edu/volume11/number9/>]

Professor Gonzalez-Acquaro made a presentation, “Models of Teaching: An Online Resource for Sexuality Education,” at the Best Practices Session for the October 2009 conference of the Association for the Advancement of Computers in Education in Vancouver, B.C., Canada.

Finally, Professor Gonzalez-Acquaro facilitated a 90-minute online workshop presentation — a webinar — on sexuality and persons with intellectual disabilities for the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps (TASH). The webinar, entitled “Educate for Today: Sexuality Education and Intellectual Disabilities,” was presented on March 10, 2010.



A young student with autism is taught playskills at the Alcanzando Center in Lima, Peru, founded with support from the Fox Family Fund — the focus of our next report.

Autism in Peru: The Alcanzando Center

Mapy Chavez, Assistant Professor
Department of Education
FOX FAMILY FUND GRANT, 2007-09

The Alcanzando Early Intervention Center, an educational facility for the treatment of children with autism in Lima, Peru, owes its existence to a grant from the Fox Family Fund.

In the summer of 2008, Professor Mapy Chavez and two students from the Wagner College Education Department went to Lima for three weeks to work with children with autism. At that time, autism treatment options in Peru were very limited, and behavioral intervention was not widely accepted. Together, Dr. Chavez and her students evaluated 25 children and advised their parents on what kind of work would best help their sons and daughters reach their potential. The experience did as much for the Wagner students as it did for the children and their families in Lima, giving our students a clear picture of the incredible need for autism services in Peru.

From that three-week visit evolved the Alcanzando Early Intervention Center. (The name Alcanzando comes from the Spanish verb, *alcanzar*, meaning “to attain, to achieve”, literally “to reach.”) Operating out

of donated office space, by the summer of 2010 Alcanzando was serving eight full-time students and one part-time student, each with an individualized instruction plan. It also offered informational and training classes to parents, teachers, and other professionals in the field.

During the Spring 2010 break, a second group of seven Wagner College students joined Dr. Chavez in Lima on an Expanding Your Horizons Study Abroad trip, volunteering at Alcanzando. Another Wagner student volunteered at the center last summer, and two more undergraduate students are currently completing their student teaching experiences at Alcanzando.

Today, Alcanzando has 13 full-time students served by five full-time teachers (three of them Wagner College graduates), two full-time student interns (both Wagner student teachers), and two part-time teachers.

“We have made tremendous progress in our first two years,” says Dr. Chavez, “and we only hope to go on changing children’s lives through education.”



A literacy fair held by the Education Department for students from several Staten Island schools last April led to a new literacy and service project at Lavelle Prep Charter School.

Portents of things to come: Literacy & service

Assistant professors Rhoda Frumkin & Katia Gonzalez-Acquaro
Department of Education
FOX FAMILY FUND GRANT, 2010-11

All the previous projects reported upon here have already been completed — but the work of the Fox Family Fund has not. There are additional projects currently under way that have already been assigned support from the Fox Fund.

One of them is a project designed by professors Rhoda Frumkin and Katia Gonzales-Acquaro of the Education Department. With assistance from undergraduate seniors and student teachers enrolled in two Wagner education classes — ED 425 (Theories of Language Acquisition and Literacy Development) and the capstone course ED 580 (School, Diversity and Society) — Frumkin and Gonzales-Acquaro are seeking to educate a single sixth-grade class about the importance of civic responsibility, at the same time equipping them with the literacy skills needed to complete a community service project.

The project has been undertaken at the John W. Lavelle Preparatory Charter School. Just 1 year old, Lavelle Prep is the first charter school to open on Staten Island.

So far the Lavelle students, working in small groups with the support of the Wagner teacher candidates, have identified a number of needs in the community and voted to choose one particular need upon which to focus for their service-learning project. They have decided to tutor younger children in literacy areas.

Now our student teachers are working with the Lavelle students to plan, implement and evaluate literacy lessons for their tutees.

Next spring, the Lavelle students will work with their Wagner student teachers to design and carry out literacy activities for Wagner College's Third Annual Reading Carnival, like their predecessors did last spring.

Dissemination

Professors Frumkin and Gonzalez-Acquaro — joined by a third Education Department faculty member, Jennifer Lauria — have already written an analysis of the Lavelle Prep service-learning

experience. Entitled “Study Groups and Service Learning: Community Engagement for Pre-Service Teachers,” it will be published as a chapter in the forthcoming book, “Service Learning and Educating in Challenging Contexts: International Perspectives,” which is being edited by Timothy Murphy of Leeds Metropolitan University (U.K.) for Continuum Publishing Company, an independent academic publisher based in New York and London.



