

Student Awards 2002
St. Ignatius Loyola Medal:
Aimee Wagner

“Understanding and appreciating the value of friendship and developing interpersonal relationships is an important experience to take away from college and into the world,” says Aimee Wagner. Over her four years at Fairfield University, Aimee has explored many avenues of friendship and helped others develop relationships as well. She is the leader of Best Buddies, a Campus Ministry sponsored organization that matches college students with mentally challenged people to forge meaningful friendships. These new friends have enjoyed a variety of interpersonal activities including: frequent lunches, bowling, hiking, and holiday socials.

When Aimee joined Best Buddies she was paired with Lisa and the two have been friends for four years. When asked how her experiences have changed her daily life Aimee says, “Lisa and I have a special type of friendship that has made me come to appreciate the simpler things in life because Lisa does. Just coming home to a phone call from Lisa makes me realize the impact I have had on her life, as she has had on mine.” Seeing Lisa give a speech at one of the recruitment meetings made Aimee very proud, “Lisa said she’s miss me next year and that I was her best girlfriend. Despite all her insecurities, she was able to express her feelings, which was a big step. And I needed to hear it.” Aimee sees the face of Jesus in the people she encounters and with such involvement with mentally challenged people like Lisa, her spirituality has been tested and strengthened.

In the past year, under Aimee’s leadership, the number of people involved with Best Buddies has grown considerably. They were able to extend the program beyond the Kennedy Center and also to the Best Buddies statewide program. Aimee has also taken steps to set up a recruitment system in order to ensure continued success of Best Buddies. The implementation of the Campus Ministry Council has provided Best Buddies with a support system of information and ideas. An Internet friendship system called E-Buddies was also created.

Best Buddies is not the only area where Aimee learned to appreciate friendships. As the women’s varsity crew captain, she helped build a strong, competitive team with a great sense of camaraderie. Looking back, she says one of her most memorable moments was during her sophomore year when Fairfield hosted the MAAC Championship. The team won and Aimee accepted the trophy. “I felt like my hard work and dedication really paid off,” she said.

Between Best Buddies and the crew team, Aimee still found time to get involved with other volunteer and extracurricular activities. Aimee was part of the North American Mission Experience in Kentucky, a Mission Volunteer to Tijuana, Mexico, a camp counselor for AmeriKids, a lector for Campus Ministry and she participated four years in many honor societies.

**Student Achievement Award:
Kevin Horne**

Three years ago on an early Saturday morning, Kevin went to a workday for Fairfield University's Chapter of Habitat for Humanity in Bridgeport, unaware that what he was doing would greatly impact his life. Through Habitat, Kevin developed his leadership skills, a love for service, construction knowledge, and an appreciation for working with a team. When the concrete steps are laid, the doors are up, and the floorboards are secured, Kevin loves the sense of accomplishment he feels at the end of the day. "Nothing beats the look on people's faces when they walk away from the worksite feeling confident and surprised with themselves that they could repair or build a house," Kevin says.

As the current president of Habitat for Humanity, Kevin has played a significant role in increasing the number of student volunteers in the three years the chapter has been on campus. The increase of volunteers has been so significant that Kevin has had to turn volunteers away when going to certain worksites. Since Kevin has been part of Habitat for Humanity the Fairfield Chapter has worked on twenty-three homes including eight this year alone. Kevin's work with Habitat for Humanity has also helped him grow spiritually. "I've always believed that you show your love for God and others through your actions," Kevin says, "and Habitat is an excellent way to do that." The people of Bridgeport and their enormous appreciation for life has inspired him to always remain involved with Habitat for Humanity.

Kevin's day doesn't end there. He is also involved with many other organizations on campus and in the community such as MAACS, Headstart Family Literacy Project, Campus Ministry, and has been a Resident Advisor and Townhouse Manager for the past two years. Academically, Kevin has achieved membership of Psi Chi, Phi Beta Kappa, and president of Alpha Sigma Nu. With Dr. John F. McCarthy, a psychology professor at Fairfield, he has co-authored three papers for a language research project.

When asked what Fairfield has meant to him, Kevin replied, "From the administration and faculty I learned things you can't teach such as communication, confidence and working in groups. I learned that life isn't always easy and it takes a lot of diligence to get through it. Fairfield has provided me with the direction I want my life to take."

After graduation, Kevin plans to pursue teaching in an inner city and possibly earn a master's degree.

**Student Achievement Award:
Amy Hurford**

For the past four years Amy Hurford has dedicated herself to being a student athlete as a member of the women's varsity basketball team. In so doing, Amy realized that her busy athletic schedule with the team made it difficult for her to participate in community service projects. Taking matters into her own hands, Amy worked out a way for the team to volunteer on their one day off. While attending the NCAA Foundation Leadership Conference in Florida, Amy was able to develop an idea to tutor children at the Burroughs Community Center in Bridgeport, Connecticut. The Center provides

youth programming to students who range in ages from 10 to 14 years old who live in the PT Barnum housing project. By spending five days at the conference, Amy acquired the necessary skills to put her plan into action.

The tutoring program has had a positive impact on both the children being tutored as well as the entire women's basketball team. Amy says, "The teachers identified the children who needed tutoring in a variety of subjects. The children seemed to relate to us because many of the players had been featured in the newspaper and some of the kids come to our games." While only four players were needed per week, usually six to eight players would wind up going. "My teammates really supported the program," says Amy. From a personal perspective, Amy expressed that she learned how to be patient and encouraging to these children, and she learned how to interact with children who are of all different lifestyles.

Amy has excelled both on the court as well as in the classroom at Fairfield. She is a member of Phi Beta Kappa and won the Award for Distinguished Work in the Natural Sciences in 2001. Besides her tutoring program and playing on the basketball team, Amy is a delegate on the Student Athlete Advisory Committee, and she is also a member of the Faculty Athletics Committee. In reminiscing about her time at Fairfield, Amy says she is glad to have been a part of this University. "There are many facets of life that I've excelled at while I've been at Fairfield. Had I gone somewhere else, I wouldn't have had these experiences." Amy's tutoring program has had a ripple effect on many other athletic teams here at Fairfield, thus proving it will continue to be successful in the years long after Amy has graduated.

Amy will continue her education in graduate school either in the U.S. or in Canada. She plans to put her knowledge of science as well as her yearning to teach to good use by becoming a biology professor.

Student Achievement Awards: Emily Sciascia

"It's been experience after experience, test after test. And I have loved every minute of it." These thoughts sum up Emily's two years as a member of the Weekend Programming committee here at Fairfield University. Emily fondly recalls how two summers ago while working on the Orientation team she was encouraged by Steve Winkle '01 and Kevin Hayes '01 to interview for the vacant Weekend Programming position. From that day on Emily has demonstrated the leadership and motivation required for this time-consuming position.

Over the past two years weekend programming at Fairfield University has improved dramatically. Emily says the goal is to keep students on campus. The programming board has been offering attractive alternatives to students to deter them from leaving campus on the weekends through diverse programming that includes campus game shows, live bands at the Levee, and free movie tickets. As a result of Emily's efforts with the programming board, attendance at weekend events here at Fairfield University has steadily increased.

Within her first year of working on Weekend Programming, Emily has taken a position of leadership. With only herself and two freshmen working on the board, Emily knew she had to step up and take on the role of leader as well as teacher. Her enthusiasm

and determination have certainly aided the programming board in achieving its goals, but Emily's experiences have also impacted her. Emily has learned patience, the ability to handle multiple responsibilities, and more importantly to give her all to a commitment, even when the rewards may appear small. Emily's actions to instill similar leadership qualities in freshmen ensure that weekend programming will continue to satisfy the student community in the years to come.

Besides Weekend Programming, Emily has worked on Senior Week, she has an internship in the Office of Special Events, and works with the S.K.I.L.L. Initiative Program. Emily is also a member of the prestigious "Who's Who in Universities and College," and has been on the Dean's List.

These experiences will be beneficial to Emily and her future career in event planning, which she hopes to pursue after graduation. Emily also promises her continuing support to Fairfield post-graduation when she says, "I'll be back here, I know I will."

Student Achievement Award: Kristin Yochum

Kristin Yochum got involved in debate in high school simply because her brother was joining, she never expected that it would play such an integral part in defining her as a person. When Kristin joined Fairfield's debate team in her freshman year, she felt a change in her life. Kristin recalls how she was the "quietest girl ever," and now four short years later, as Chairperson of the Debate Team, Kristin has transformed into "a student leader as well as a more outgoing person."

Unlike many organizations, the Debate team requires a significant amount of time per week. During the fall semester it was not uncommon for Kristen to coordinate the travel arrangements for the team when it traveled to different schools almost every weekend to participate in debates, and the rigorous schedule slowed down only slightly in the spring. While many people would shy away from such a demanding and exhausting schedule, Kristin admits that this is what attracted her to the team.

Kristin says, "The key to continued success of the team is to ensure that the members enjoy every minute of it." The Debate Team is a lot more than simply practicing and attending debates. To encourage a love for the team, Kristin helped form a summer workshop that allowed team members to meet and work on speaking, acclimating and debating. This helped the team bond and get settled at school before the actual debate season began. Kristin also implemented a workshop during the school year that benefits new members of the team who were unable to attend the summer workshop. The primary goal of these workshops was to bring about a cohesiveness and camaraderie among team members. Kristin's efforts were rewarded when the Debate Team was the Special Interest Organization of the Year in 2000.

Kristin's busy schedule does not end with the Debate Team. Kristin is also involved in multicultural relations at Fairfield and was one of the people responsible for planning the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration that takes place on campus.

In the future Kristin hopes to attend graduate school and pursue a career in either political management or public policy in Washington, D.C. "My life was a blank slate," Kristin says, "and Fairfield University gave me the opportunity to create myself."

**William J. Kramer '60 Humanitarian Award:
Kathryn O'Connell**

Kathryn O'Connell entered Fairfield University as one person and is now leaving as a completely new one. This transformation is largely due to her involvement with Mission Volunteers and her two journeys to Haiti where she worked at Project Pierre Tousaint, the Homeless Center for Boys at 13 Street. Upon entering Fairfield, Kathryn had been concentrating on pursuing politics and the potential financial rewards, but after her trips to Haiti her perspective changed. "I have seen such poverty in Haiti, but the people there are amazing. From them I've realized there is a bigger world out there beyond these walls and not to worry about the material things because there are more important things to worry about."

Kathryn was terrified to get on the plane the first time she went to Haiti, but as soon as she set her foot down she was in love. In Haiti, Kathryn taught many children how to read and write. Her trips there were challenging and it was difficult seeing the poverty that the people of Haiti face. While Kathryn says she may not have made a very big impact there, "Seeing those children's faces after they comprehended addition of something that they had struggled with is unbelievably rewarding." In the end, Kathryn's spirituality was stronger than it had ever been before. She also became emotionally invested in the lives of the children she met there. Her guiding force has been Father Paul Carrier, S.J., Fairfield University Chaplain. "I would not have come as far as I have as a person if it wasn't for Father Carrier," she says when asked who initiated her interest.

Being president of the Campus Ministry Council has allowed her to develop her skills as a leader and has given her an opportunity to make changes. During her time as president, the Campus Ministry Council created a 5:30 p.m. Sunday mass for students followed by a dinner to promote community building; they also recently held a canned food drive for Hunger Homelessness Week. "The Campus Ministry Council brings all aspects of Campus Ministry together and they are a phenomenal group who are dedicated to what they do," Kathryn says. By increasing the number of people involved with Campus Ministry and developing an excellent reputation is Kathryn's way of giving back to all those that made her who she is today.

Besides Mission Volunteers and Campus Ministry Council Kathryn has found time to be a Eucharistic Minister, the coordinator of Monday Night mass, and co-chair of Senior Week. She is also involved with Prospect House and the Boys and Girls Club. Academically, Kathryn is a member of the Politics Honor Society, National Leadership Society and her name frequents the Dean's List. "Through Fairfield I learned that service isn't a sacrifice, it is a privilege," says Kathryn, "This University has made me proud of the person I have become."

