

# Spotlight on the **CAROL FARBER HONORS PROGRAM**

at Nassau Community College

Fall 2018 - Issue 2

## Spotlight on Honors Students Giving Back



### International Coastal Clean Up Day

On September 15th, the Honors Club participated in the Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Clean Up Day. As a worldwide movement, this day is one of the largest united volunteer efforts to preserve and protect beaches and waterlines. Going beyond just collecting trash, each specific piece was recorded in order to help fight the root of future ocean trash. Gathering at Garvies Point Museum and Preserve in Glen Cove, we helped clean the beach of debris such as broken glass shards, plastic bottle caps, and plastic straws in addition to finding interesting objects such as rusty motor engines. Ultimately, we gathered 6.7 pounds of trash! It was a great way to help clear the coastline in Long Island and we hope to have contributed to a cleaner global future for all oceans and wildlife.



### Making Strides Breast Cancer Awareness Walk

The Honors Club participated in the Breast Cancer Awareness Walk held in Central Park on October 14th. Over a dozen people made a strong, positive impact by raising nearly \$400 for cancer research. It was humbling that as students, they can help make a difference in a problem that plagues too many people's lives. Even those that were unable to walk were able to contribute by showing support on social media platforms and raising awareness; they were able to affect people struggling with this terrible disease in a way that they will be forever grateful for.



### PSY 203 Helps out the N.E.S.T

Following a successful pre-Thanksgiving Psychology Department Food Drive, students enrolled in Honors Psychology along with Dr. Lisa Korman hauled unpacked, sorted, and shelved about 200 pounds of donations to the N.E.S.T.

## Welcome to the Honors Program Newsletter!

### Honors Program

[ncc.edu/programsandcourses/  
honorsprogram/](http://ncc.edu/programsandcourses/honorsprogram/)

### Contact us!

[HonorsProgram@ncc.edu](mailto:HonorsProgram@ncc.edu)

**Prof. Richard Cohen**  
Richard.Cohen@ncc.edu

**Prof. Liz Hynes-Musnisky**  
Elizabeth.Hynes-Musnisky@  
ncc.edu

# Spotlight on Honors Students Giving Back

continued

## Andy Diaz Volunteers in Puerto Rico

To hear the powerful stories from the native Puerto Ricans has forever changed my entire understanding of the world. It felt awful to hear Puerto Ricans tell of their subpar living circumstances and know that even I, as a foreigner from New York, was given the luxury of a University residence during my stay in Puerto Rico. It felt awful to know that each day I volunteered myself to Puerto Rico, I'd find three meals guaranteed while a considerable amount of the natives were malnourished.

Marta, an elderly widow affected by the superstorm, is the most solemn epitome of tenderness and love. I shed heartfelt tears through our conversation as she told me of the effect of Hurricane Maria. It must be mentioned that FEMA sent her a \$500 check - and that was all. This is a homeowner whose entire second floor was torn off the foundation. Can you imagine? As though it was enough to cover the damages; I was startled. Helping repair her roof through the rain was made easy by how lovely a person she was. I cut my lunches short to volunteer all that I could.

I learned a sad belief held by Puerto Ricans. It is said in Puerto Rico that the reason behind the lackluster aid offered by the federal government in response to Hurricane Maria is because of the shortcomings involving the late 90s government in PR. When the federal government sent funds to Puerto Ricans during Hurricane Jose in 1999, the administration either partook in the corruption or couldn't prevent it. At a time when the people desperately needed access to capital to rebuild their homes, the PR political machine funneled the funds to the greedy and politically well-connected.

In the many conversations I broached with the natives in PR, one cannot deny the feeling of their resilience. Here are a people who went without electricity



in their homes for 5 months. I learned of how the community came together during this tragedy as extension cords ran through home after home for miles, in the effort so that the neighborhood could be lit up. If a person was finally able to acquire a generator, neighbors were assured they would be taken care

of. The industrial areas of town distributed electricity to their locals as far as the electricity could go. I walked into one home we repaired where everyone who lived there was refugees who came together, from their destroyed home 9 months ago.

The stories are endless, and I am glad to know that I was able to have an individual effect on several families. But more help is due, we already failed when it is said that 8 months have gone by and these conditions still persist. This conversation should not be happening on the year one-year anniversary of the hurricane, but it unfortunately is.

Congratulations class of 2018!

## Spotlight on Honors Orientation

The 2018 Honors Orientation was a huge success. Incoming students were able to mingle and interact with one another and start establishing deeper bonds with both new and current students. Through the use of icebreakers, students were able to show their personalities and open up to the welcoming community of the Honors Program. Honors Orientation Leaders helped lead and engage the almost 90 people present. The Honors Program Co-Coordinators Professor Cohen and Professor Musnisky spoke to the students sharing personal stories and college advice and giving students a warm and helpful welcome into the program. An alumni of the Honors Program, Alex Hall, who is now attending the Royal Veterinary College (one of the world's leading veterinary programs), also spoke to incoming students and gave them advice on their time here at Nassau Community College. At the end of Orientation, during the candle lighting ceremony, incoming students recited the Honors Pledge, promising to uphold true moral integrity while at Nassau Community College and beyond. Overall, Honors Orientation allowed students to understand the vision set for them and the wonderful road that lies ahead.



## Spotlight on Summer Research and Internships



Chanelle Farquharson participated in the Summer Research Immersion (SRI) Program at Binghamton University. Chanelle stated that it was an invaluable opportunity that furthered her educational career. The knowledge that she gained in those two short months was not limited to educational advances but also professional and social. She had the opportunity to engage in conversation with professionals in a growing field in microbiology and make connections with students with interests similar to her own. "The Carol Farber Honors Program at Nassau Community College allowed me to enroll in classes that enriched my education and prepared me for the rigorous coursework required to succeed in this program."





## Spotlight on Honors Student Art Gallery Opening Night



The Honors Program hosted its first annual Art Gallery Opening Night in the Honors Student Space. The evening was a major success as the room was filled to capacity with people admiring the great artwork submitted by Nassau Community College's immensely talented Honors students. Even the president of the college, Dr. Keen, stopped by to everyone's delight and was extremely impressed with not only the talent in the room, which was so apparent it didn't even require mentioning, but the effort and time students dedicated to their art. In keeping with the tradition of an art gallery opening, cheese, crackers, and "wine" (in the form of sparkling apple juice) was enjoyed by all.

Artist Ava Shore shared the following concerning her pieces:

"My pieces are about how our self-image is so easily manipulated since we live in an age where social media forces us to compare ourselves and our self worth to not only our peers, but strangers as well. It's very easy to get trapped in a vicious cycle of self-hatred and depression because we feel we are either not on the same level as our peers, or because we feel we are not good enough. The main point of my photography is to try and call attention to how we all are truly "perfect" even if we don't necessarily know it yet, it is always within you, and it may take time, but you will find it one day."





## Prof. Richard Cohen Raises Over \$4,000 for Honors Scholarships

(the following article is reprinted with permission from the Oceanside Herald and was written by Michael Smollins)

It was around mile 23, about three hours into his quest to complete the TCS New York City Marathon on Sunday, that Richard Cohen said he was tempted to slow down. But the vocal support of his wife, Stacey Schwartz, and his students at Nassau Community College boisterously cheering him on and waving posters from the sidewalk helped propel him to the finish line.

"I was really tired and struggling," Cohen said. "Just knowing that they were ahead, and if I ran faster I'd be able to see them, it kept me going."

Cohen, 42, an Oceanside High School alumnus, decided to run the marathon as a way to raise money for scholarships for his students at NCC, where he is a Co-Coordinator of the honors program and teaches physical science, specializing in weather and climate.

He said the weather was perfect for the marathon, which helped him finish in three hours, 49 minutes — three minutes faster than his goal. In all, he raised over \$4,000 in scholarship money for his students.

The 26.2-mile course starts on the east end of Staten Island, and participants cross the Verrazano Bridge and run through Brooklyn, into Queens, over the Queensboro Bridge into Manhattan, up to the Bronx, and through the final stretch down Fifth Avenue into Central Park. Cohen said his desire to ensure his students succeed is what helped him persevere.

"I figured I'd use my passion for running and my passion for teaching students as a way to raise as much scholarship money for the students as possible," he said.

His students, including Jane Jeong and Laura and Melissa Fragomeni, showed their support for him by standing on the curb and cheering him on as he ran by. His father, Stuart, came, too.

Cohen said he chose to raise money for his students because many of them have so much happening in their personal lives and have to afford school at the same time.

"The students that I work with are just truly amazing people," he said. "It's amazing what they have to go through to achieve what they achieve. They all have jobs. They try to fit school in, and they have a lot of family responsibilities. It's really a struggle for them, and it's nice to see how much work they put into this."

# Prof. Richard Cohen Raises Over \$4,000 for Honors Scholarships

continued

NCC student Lauren Tyson said she couldn't attend the race, but tracked Cohen's progress on the NYC Marathon app, which uses chips in the runners' bibs to monitor them.

Tyson said that when she moved to the United States from South Africa and enrolled at the school in August 2017, Cohen helped guide her toward the courses she took and was there to offer her advice when she needed it.

"He's one of the most phenomenal men and teachers," she said. "This school is lucky to have him. He goes above and beyond, and every student who has encountered him has left a better person."

Schwarcz also used the app to track her husband's progress after he passed her, and she called him when he had one mile left to motivate him to finish. "It felt great to be able to provide a little extra encouragement to get him through that last mile," she said. "I know he loves to be able to put in a little burst of speed at the finish line, so I thought a little last-minute cheering would help."

To prepare for the event, Cohen woke up at 4:30 a.m. three times a week to run, and he gradually increased his distance as the marathon approached. Now a resident of New York City, he said he ran along the

West Side, his preferred route taking him along the greenway, around Battery Park, over the Brooklyn Bridge and then over the Manhattan Bridge. He said he also frequently ran in Central Park and over the George Washington Bridge. He added that training in the summer months was grueling because of the heat, but his fondness for running helped him press on.

"I love running first thing in the morning, when the city is silent," he said. "Just being outside and feeling like the city is mine because there's no one out and about, it's a great feeling."

Cohen grew up on Frederick Street in Oceanside, where his parents still live, and graduated from Oceanside High School in 1994. He earned a bachelor's in meteorological science at Penn State University and a master's in secondary education at Adelphi University. He is now completing his doctorate in science education at Stony Brook University.

Cohen recalled that he was out of shape in college and decided to start exercising regularly. He got into fitness and karate, but said he didn't start enjoying running until about four years ago. Two years ago, he attended the marathon as a spectator and decided that he wanted to participate himself.

"Just seeing the grandstand and seeing the finish line and all of the signage that was up and all the people taking pictures, I figured this was something that I needed to do," he said. "Something just clicked in me."

To prepare for Sunday's feat, he ran in the Chicago Marathon on Oct. 7, which he finished in three hours, 53 minutes. He said the course was challenging because it rained at mile 8 and at mile 11 he was tripped and fell to the ground. Nevertheless, he got up and finished the race, which he said was instrumental in helping him prepare for the New York City event.

Many of his students motivated him. Cohen said, by texting and emailing him encouraging words to keep him on track. The hardest part of the race Sunday was the logistics, he noted. Cohen woke up at 4:30 a.m. to take the subway to a ferry, which transported him to a bus that took him to the starting point on Staten Island. He said the hard work was worth it to be able to help students and complete the marathon.

"It's gonna be something that I'm proud of for the rest of my life," he said. "Hopefully the money will help my students achieve their goals."

## Debbie Soufian Interns at University of the People in Tel Aviv and Ends Up Performing Improv

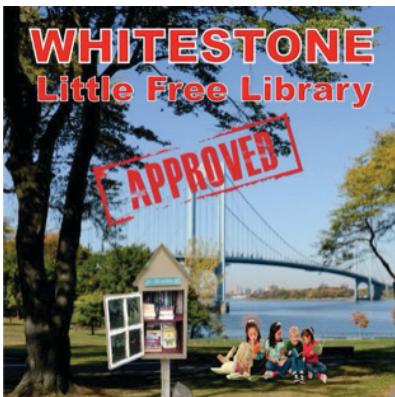


This past summer I invested two months interning at a non-profit in Tel Aviv learning, more than ever, how interconnected our world is. University of The People is a tuition-free online accredited university that aims to provide a degree to anybody around the world with a computer and internet access. My job, initially, was logging and tracking donations into the database.

Perhaps my most incredibly fortuitous experience was apart from work—in entertainment. A few months back I used to watch a Spanish television show called “Morocco: Love in Times of War” in order to improve my skills with the language. I looked up one of the artists on Instagram and saw he follows a Tel Aviv based comedian. I reached out to the comedian knowing I would be living in the city, and he responded to let him know once I was there. I was studying and performing improvisation in NYC and intrigued by comedy and humor. Once I got to Israel, I told him I planned to make it to the English comedy night at his theatre and looked forward to meeting him. In a beautiful misunderstanding, he wrote back that he could not wait to see me perform. I began to innocently panic. “Does he really think I was planning to perform? I’ve never done stand up before and it seems terrifying standing on a stage alone with a preplanned routine of jokes.” I remembered that a month earlier I was in school

focused on taking classes in accounting, statistics, and economics. I needed a creative outlet, a means of balancing both sides of my brain. I remembered that I had once interviewed a Williamsburg based artist who was committed to something called a “100-day project.” It’s when you practice a craft for one hundred consecutive days with the intention of witnessing how the form evolves and improves. So during that time, I decided I would write at least one joke a day of my observations or experiences that day for a month, rather than one hundred days, to keep myself creative and aware. Flash forward to finding out I would have the chance to perform stand up in Tel-Aviv, I remembered I saved some of those jokes in my Notes app and had them with me. I wrote them down on a Word document, attempted a routine with transitions and relatability, recorded it, and for a week replayed the voice memo when I had free time in transit on the bus or before bed. When it came time to perform, I brought a friend I met on a previous trip who had moved there, for support. The space was small, intimate, and cozy. Truly a magical energy of twinkle lights, old French books, vibrant art, and instruments. Everything about it felt perfect. Getting on stage felt natural. Trying to connect with the audience and be vulnerable on a stage with quite a few eyes directed at me was definitely a novel experience. However, messing up was irrelevant, I was too in the moment to worry about what I did or did not say a second earlier.

So cheers to this—everything in life is somehow interconnected. This summer taught me that. To trust the process, and live in the moment. To put your best in, and if some divine opportunity presents itself, have the faith and courage that you will either have or be given the tools to be successful. It taught me that skills, hopes, passions—they always have a purpose, and somehow manifest their reasoning, even if it's on the other side of the world. But obviously, easier said than done.



## Jonathan Salazar Gives Back to the Whitestone Community

I've been thinking of fun, meaningful ways to give back to my community and I stumbled on this organization called Little Free Library. Little Free Library is a nonprofit organization that inspires a love of reading, builds community, and sparks creativity by fostering neighborhood book exchanges around the world. Reading at a late age in my life has changed my mindset and my ability to become the best version of myself, and I wanted to share that opportunity with kids, families and adults in my community.

There is a beautiful park in Whitestone, named Francis Lewis Park. This park offers incredible views of the bridges and skyline that make living in Queens wonderful. I envision families going to the park on a beautiful day, flying kites, dogs running around and just people taking a book to read on the bench or grass to enjoy a relaxing read. I grew up in the Whitestone/Bayside area of Queens, spending most of my years from middle school to high school in the town. I'm humbled and grateful that I have the opportunity to give back to my community with something so simple and in a cost effective way.

It wasn't easy and took months of preparation, meetings and phone calls going back and forth with the NYC Parks Department, but I didn't let it discourage me from seeing this project through. As they say "It's not over until it's over". What helped me get this far was organization and support from my family and community. As a full time student at NYU and an intern at The Paley Center for Media, staying organized and mastering time management combined with tenacity and grit helped me along the way

With guidance from the local community group "We Love Whitestone" and generous donations from supporting families and individuals that believe in the greater good in this project, we are on our way to developing and building the library with donations coming in every day. I am expecting the library up and running by the end of October 2018.

I hope this is the first of many more Little Free Libraries in the Queens, NY area.

## Spotlight on Honors Alumni

### Jaslin Kaur Publishes Her First Article in Huffington Post

Jaslin discussed the ramifications that Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos' proposed new regulations on Title IX would have on sexual assault survivors at community colleges. As stated in the article, "The new rule would allow community colleges and other schools to disregard violence that occurs outside of their programs and activities, even when that violence interferes with a survivor's education. That means that schools wouldn't be required to investigate and provide support to a survivor who is assaulted in her off-campus apartment by a student from her biology class. This policy would have especially serious ramifications for community college students, many of whom do not live on campus or are enrolled part time. In fact, the college sexual assault crisis is particularly acute at commuter schools, where the environment around the immediate campus can be a high-risk area for sexual assault and stalking." The full text can be found here: [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/opinion-betsy-devos-campus-sexual-assault-rape-title-nine\\_us\\_5bf5942be4b0771fb6b530a9](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/opinion-betsy-devos-campus-sexual-assault-rape-title-nine_us_5bf5942be4b0771fb6b530a9)

Congratulations Jaslin!

The screenshot shows the top portion of Jaslin Kaur's article. At the top left is the Huffpost logo with three horizontal bars. To its right is the word 'HUFFPOST' in white. Below the logo is the word 'OPINION' in a small blue box. Next to it is the date '11/22/2018 08:00 am ET'. The main title 'What Betsy DeVos' New Rule Means For Sexual Assault Survivors At Community Colleges' is displayed in large, bold, black font. Below the title is a smaller sub-headline 'Jaslin Kaur Guest Writer' next to a small profile picture of Jaslin Kaur.



## Spotlight on Current Students

### James Ferrone makes Eagle Scout

James originally joined the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) back in the second grade with his older brother Thomas. After his brother advanced through the ranks of the BSA and earned his Eagle Scout in 2015, James was inspired to try his hardest to do the same.

James really began his push for Eagle Scout in July of 2017, when he finished up the last of the required merit badges, and started to think about what kind of project he would like to complete. He eventually found one that was in his home town of East Meadow. He settled on building birdhouses for the American Robin, American Kestrel, Eastern Bluebird, and the House Wren for the East Meadow Bird Sanctuary.

After meeting with his Troop leaders, he got approved and sent the project to the Council for the final approval. It was finally approved in May of this year. However, before he could start the project, he needed to raise money for it, so he turned to several local businesses for donations, as well as anyone else who wanted to help out. He ended up raising \$1,100 in total, nearly \$300 more than he needed.

With his Scout Troop's help, he completed building the Birdhouses in one night, June 26, and then hung them up in the Sanctuary on June 30. In addition to the birdhouses, they cleaned up parts of the Sanctuary to make it more habitable for the birds to live there.

The final write up of the project was completed by mid-July, and final approval from the Scoutmaster to hand it in to Council was granted. The project was handed in on August 6th.

Now he just had to patiently wait to hear back from the Council as to when the Board of Review would be. He finally heard back from them and had his Review on October 16th and learned that he had earned his Eagle Scout Award, BSA's highest rank.

# Spotlight on Honors Faculty



Professor David Pecan's article Negotiating Interpretative Paradigms in Monmouth's Historia Regum Britanniae appeared in vol. 4, no. 2, of the academic journal *Gnosis* (January 2018). In April of 2018, Professor David Pecan chaired the panel Sexy Beast: Amorous Monsters, Incest, and Bestiality in Medieval Celtic, Anglo-Saxon, and Scandinavian Literature, as part of the 49th Northeast Modern Languages Association Conference, where he also presented his article Sex with Swans and Trolls: Celtic and Scandinavian Contexts for Beowulf 1501-1502a. In May 2018, Professor Pecan was a guest at the International Medieval Congress, where he presented his research on Teaching Beowulf within the Context of Old Norse Literature, part of his 2016 National Endowment for the Humanities Award and residency at the Medieval Institute. While at the Medieval Congress, he also chaired a panel on Old English Religious Poetry, featuring presenters representing University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign, University of California, Berkeley, and Cornell University. In October 2018, Professor Pecan was invited to SUNY Binghamton's Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies conference Medieval Unfreedoms: Slavery, Servitude, and Trafficking in Humans before the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, where he presented his paper "þeow....unfæg": Diction, Ambiguity, and the Slave Who Wakes the Dragon in Beowulf 2210b-2323.

## Community College Chemistry Coursetaking and STEM Academic Persistence

Richard Cohen<sup>†,‡</sup> and Angela M. Kelly<sup>\*,†,§</sup>

<sup>†</sup>Institute for STEM Education, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, New York 11794, United States

<sup>‡</sup>Department of Physical Sciences, Nassau Community College, Garden City, New York 10025, United States

<sup>\*</sup>Department of Physics & Astronomy, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, New York 11794, United States

persistence. Data included grades, demographics, enrollment patterns, and degree status for 1,690 chemistry students who matriculated at a diverse, suburban community college from 2011–2014. Descriptive statistics indicated 32% of students received grades of D, F, or W in introductory chemistry; 49% of these students changed their majors after taking the course, with four-fifths of those degree changers switching to non-STEM fields. Binary logistic regression models revealed that chemistry enrollment was a significant predictor of degree change to non-STEM disciplines, with biology and anatomy/physiology coursetaking predicting STEM persistence. Degree change to non-STEM was predicted by chemistry performance but not by student characteristics including gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. The results indicate that chemistry coursetaking and performance is a notable factor affecting student persistence in STEM disciplines, and achievement is largely independent of student background variables. Implications for community college chemistry teaching and STEM academic advisement were discussed.

Professor Richard Cohen published his first article in The Journal of Chemical Education! Community colleges educate nearly half of all students who complete post-secondary degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines. For many matriculated students, chemistry is a required gatekeeping course for post-secondary retention and advancement in STEM majors. His research explored community college student enrollment and performance in introductory chemistry courses for STEM majors, and how chemistry achievement related to student background characteristics and degree

## Congratulations to our December Graduates:

Nicholas Huckstadt  
Andy Diaz  
Theresa Devivo  
Bridget Cunningham  
Michael Pacura  
Bridget Rao  
Aretha Lee  
Gabrielle Eversgerd  
Thomas McGovern  
Anita Wittner  
Niara Moore  
Cesar Cabreja  
Remonda Missha



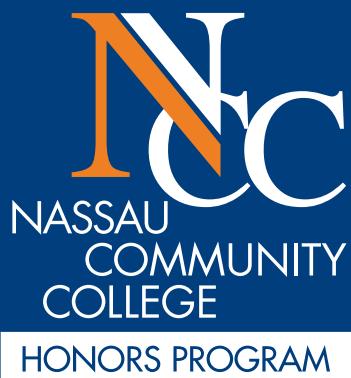
## Congratulations to our Distinguished Honors Student Graduates:

Nicholas Huckstadt  
Andy Diaz  
Theresa Devivo  
Bridget Cunningham  
Michael Pacura  
Bridget Rao  
Aretha Lee  
Gabrielle Eversgerd  
Thomas McGovern  
Anita Wittner  
Niara Moore  
Cesar Cabreja  
Remonda Missha



One Education Drive  
Garden City, NY 11530-6793

Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage  
**PAID**  
Garden City, NY  
Permit No. 71



- [Like us on Facebook: Honors Program - Nassau Community College - HPNCC](#)
- [Follow us on Instagram: @CarolFarberHonorsProgram](#)
- [Join our Network on LinkedIn: Carol Farber Honors Program](#)