A Farm Grows in North Philly
Haunted House? Pennhurst State School and Hospital was transformed into a Halloween attraction in 2010. One CLA alum is working to preserve its historic site.

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ALUMNI FEATURE
Preserving Pennhurst
Alumna James Conroy is working to preserve the real history of Pennhurst State School and Hospital in spite of its annual transformation into a haunted attraction.

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ALUMNI PROFILE
A Long Road to Graduation
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Temple University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all in every aspect of its operations. The university has pledged not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, marital status or disability. This policy extends to all educational, service and employment programs of the university.

College of Liberal Arts
TEMPLE UNIVERSITY®
Liberal Arts Alumni Work to Improve Their Communities

Liberal arts education, and the conversation still resonates with me now. At CLA, we strive to educate our students not merely in the facts of their discipline but within broader themes that encourage them to think critically as they become citizens of the world. Our students take their degrees in the social sciences and humanities and apply them in ways that continue to surprise and inspire me. Ellen Warner, profiled in this issue of Compass, turned her history degree into a career that has included teaching, fundraising for nonprofits and opening her own small business. Current student Alex Epstein, whose garden is pictured on the cover, is using his liberal arts education to help found community gardens. We proudly tell our students that a liberal arts degree equips them for a variety of careers and a lifetime of engagement with the world around them. Ellen and Alex are just two great examples of Owls putting their degrees into action to make their communities a better place. There are more than 60,000 CLA alumni living in every state in the U.S. and numerous countries around the world, and I know so many of you are also out there forming your own communities. This issue of Compass is brimming with Owls who have used their experience in the liberal arts to make positive changes in their world. We celebrate Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban and Richard Lobban for their induction into Temple’s Gallery of Success, honoring their lifelong commitment to scholarship and adventure. We also note alumni like Roxnyrage Goldsmith, who has turned her career success into a scholarship supporting students who face financial emergencies and would otherwise be forced to halt their studies. I am so proud to share news of our accomplishments with you and I hope they become your own. I look forward to sharing more news with you in the spring issue of Compass.

Welcoming our New Faculty

Amer Wolcho originally hails from Tel-Aviv, Israel. It was at Tel-Aviv University where he completed his Ph.D. in history. Molcho is looking forward to sharing his interests and expertise with Temple students.

New to the philosophy department is Lara Ostric of Rejeka, Croatia. Though she would rather be sailing the Adriatic Sea, Ostric has enjoyed exploring Philadelphia’s different neighborhoods.

Austral Rege is bringing to the criminal justice department his current research into cybercrimes against critical infrastructure. A native of Newark, New Jersey, Rege is impressed with Temple’s vibrant campus.

Eileen Ryan, Ph.D. Columbia University, is joining our history department this year. Currently she is researching Italian colonial history in Libya.

New to Temple’s sociology degree is Tom Wantzen, who strives to develop knowledge in the interests of social justice. Wantzen appreciates the diversity of students at Temple, and is currently researching the workplace experiences of LGBT scientists and engineers.

David Waaler, originally from Saint Louis, Missouri, completed his Ph.D. at Rutgers but has now crossed the river to teach at Temple. Waaler may frequent the Mutter Museum, but if given the opportunity to travel anywhere, he would choose Turkey.

The critical languages department added Yun Zhu of Nanjing, China this year. She may be researching the representation of sisterhood in Chinese literature and film, but Zhu admitted to reading up on Philadelphia’s history before coming to Temple.

After growing up in Oklahoma and completing her Ph.D. at the University of Kansas, Milary Brie Lown is now interested in compiling the literary landscape of Philadelphia. With this project and others, Lown hopes to equip Temple students with the tools of the humanities.

Marina Nikkalyzyna, Ph.D. University of Chicago, plans on researching immigrant labor in the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia. Mikhalyzyna looks forward to lecturing and mentoring Temple students.

Sarah Meacham came to the right city to pursue her research in public art and urban communities and is so far enjoying the congenial nature of Philadelphia. As a professor, Meacham enjoys helping people look at the world in new ways.

New to Temple’s political science department is Megan Foster Lynch, who is currently researching the local dynamic of violence against civilians during civil war. Foster Lynch loves traveling to France, but the next best thing is reading La carte et le Territoire by Michel Houellebecq.

Ivylic Ichie loves to teach and learn. Good thing she’s joining Temple’s Department of African American Studies this year. She’s currently building on her dissertation research exploring the participation of enslaved black women in organized resistance.

San Foster, originally from London, completed his Ph.D. at Harvard, and is joining the Temple faculty this year. He is currently researching 20th century literature and Samuel Beckett, but took a break from that to enjoy Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina.

Jeffrey Doshna loves teaching almost as much as he loves the beach. Doshna is enthusiastic for Temple’s community engagement and commitment to life-long learning.

Tirtha Sumonh Das originally hails from Kolkata, India and is currently researching labor and health economics. He enjoys the city life Philadelphia has to offer.

Penny for your thoughts: Hattie May Watt.

Most Temple students and alumni are familiar with university founder Russell Conwell’s “Acres of Diamonds” speech. Fewer people know his “History of the Fifty-Seven Cents” sermon, which describes how he and a little girl named Hattie May Watt turned 57 cents into a building we are all familiar with: Temple’s Performing Arts Center, previously known as the Baptist Temple.

In the 1912 sermon, Conwell describes meeting Hattie Mays outside the Sunday school service. It was too crowded for her to venture in alone. He helped her find a seat inside, and spoke with her the next day. “When we get the money which with which to erect a school building, we are going to construct one large enough to get all the little children in,” he told her, “and we are going to begin very soon to raise the money for it.” Hattie May died shortly thereafter. At the girl’s funeral, her mother gave Conwell a change purse filled with 57 cents, which she reported Hattie May had been saving to help build a new school. Inspired by her commitment, Conwell changed Hattie May’s gift into pennies, which he sold to parishioners for $250. Among the profit were 54
Mary Ann Mannino Awards Honor First-Year Writers

Professor Mary Ann Mannino was invested in CLA’s First-Year Writing Program since its inception. First as an instructor for more than 15 years, and then as a scholarship donor. She even served as director for two years, from 2008–2010. Before passing away in November of this year, she established the Mary Ann Mannino Awards to honor promising First-Year Writing students.

In addition to the awards, Mannino left behind a number of grateful English Department colleagues. “Mary Ann was a great teacher and a wonderful colleague,” said Susan Wells. “Nothing was stronger than her love and courage.”

The First-Year Writing Program includes two English courses, English 701 and 802, both of which have companion sections for students for whom English is a second language. Mannino worked especially with students in English 701, a course that develops students’ writing abilities for later academic work. Many of her students were enrolled in Temple’s Russell Conwell Center, where Mannino was instrumental in designing their Summer Bridge Program for underprepared first-year students.

This spring, the English department will host the second annual Mannino awards. The scholarships honor students whose writing has developed throughout the semester. The awards also recognize students’ concern for their community. At the inaugural award ceremony last spring, Mannino remarked that it is important to award students who show improvement.

“I just believe in my students,” she said. “I loved my students. People that work are the ones who succeed.”

In order to be considered for the award, students must submit portfolios containing at least one draft and one final revised version of each of their papers as well as a cover letter describing how their experiences inside and outside the classroom have illustrated their dedication to helping the community. Last spring, Hinda Finnman won first prize, with Carolina Baciga and Martika Williams winning runner-up honors.

At the ceremony, First-Year Writing Professor Gabriella Kecskes congratulated Finnman on her achievement. “She did really, really hard and courageous work,” Kecskes said.
The former Pennhurst State School and Hospital is turned into a Halloween attraction each year. Alumnus James Conroy is dedicated to preserving the history of what really happened to the developmentally disabled patients who lived there.

By Danielle Lynch
After his first visit to Pennhurst State School and Hospital, Dr. James Conroy said he cried during his entire car ride home. He was only 21 years old at the time and had been assigned to visit the facility, along with others across the country, as part of a project at his first job, a consulting company based outside of Washington, D.C. Specifically, he was assigned to study a new law, the Developmental Disabilities Act of 1970.

After gathering several directories from institutions across the country, Conroy threw their names into a box, shuffled them around and picked out one as a way to decide the first place he would visit. He said that by “unbelievable chance” Pennhurst was the first institution he picked out of the box. He drove from his parents’ home in Washington, D.C., to the 114-year-old facility in East Vincent, Pa. in his father’s blue Chevy.

When he arrived at the facility, formerly known as the Eastern State Institution for the Feeble-Minded and Epileptic, he was deeply saddened. He said there were more than 3,000 people living at Pennhurst and their families for seven years,” said Conroy. “We learned that the qualities of life of people when they moved out of Pennhurst went wildly upward.”

Immediately following the ruling, government officials wanted to study how the deinstitutionalization would work. These officials came up with the idea for the Pennhurst Longitudinal Study and Temple University was awarded the contract. Immediately following the ruling, government officials wanted to study how the deinstitutionalization would work. These officials came up with the idea for the Pennhurst Longitudinal Study and Temple University was awarded the contract.

For example, Conroy said the former Pennhurst residents had more self-determination, comfort, and healthy relationships with families. Conroy said his project was in full swing in 1979 because his team began collecting information about the 1,156 Pennhurst residents immediately after Broderick’s 1978 ruling. Conroy has conducted 10 similar studies since then, including the deinstitutionalization of 400 people in New Hampshire, 1,000 in Oklahoma and 2,400 in California.

Gran, who is now an attorney and partner in Reisman Carolla Gran LLP in Haddonfield, N.J., said she is familiar with Conroy’s studies.

On the way home, he cried. When he got home, his parents asked him what was wrong.

“I just saw a place with 3,000 human beings—that we would not put our dog in for a weekend,” he told his parents.

Conroy now lives in Wynnewood, Montgomery County. He is a medical sociologist specializing in quantitative evaluation of health and social programs. He first became involved with the study following a landmark ruling by United States District Court Judge Raymond J. Broderick, which called for the deinstitutionalization of residents at Pennhurst. Broderick’s ruling was based on a class action suit filed on behalf of Terri Lee Halderman, a resident at Pennhurst who argued there was abuse and inhumane conditions at the facility. Conroy said Boderick ruled people with developmental disabilities have the right to live in the community.

Judith Gran, a 1983 graduate of the Temple University James E. Beasley School of Law, had the opportunity to work on some of the legal proceedings related to Pennhurst. Gran said the findings and decisions in the Pennhurst case “established that everyone, no matter what his or her disability, can live a regular life in the community and receive all the support they need there.”

Conroy, now 63 years old, graduated from Yale University in 1970 with a bachelor’s degree in physiological psychology. He then earned his master’s degree in sociology/program evaluation 1982 and his doctorate in medical sociology from Temple University in 1982.

While he attended Temple University, he was the principal investigator and designer of the Pennhurst Longitudinal Study. At the time, it was the largest study ever conducted regarding the effects of moving people with developmental disabilities from institutions to small community homes.

Conroy was also permitted to play baseball. According to the Pennhurst Preservation Alliance, teams were integrated 25 years before Major League Baseball.
Dr. Conroy’s longitudinal studies of the well-being of class members as they moved from institutions to community - and continued to live in the community – were groundbreaking studies that have been replicated all over the country and have established conclusively that persons with the most significant and complex disabilities are better off in the community,” she said.

* * * * *

HALLOWEEN CONTROVERSY

In 2008, Pennhurst became the center of controversy when the state sold it to private businessman Richard Chakejian, who decided to turn a portion of the property into a Halloween attraction called the Pennhurst Asylum.

Conroy and his colleagues at the Pennhurst Memorial & Preservation Alliance have argued that the Halloween attraction is inappropriate. They argue that the imagery at the attraction is degrading to people with disabilities. “I call it the final indignity,” Conroy said.

Conroy said he offered some suggestions to Chakejian about how to improve his attraction but none were implemented. He said that instead of using images of actual people in the attraction, it would have been less offensive if there were people dressed as vampires, mummies or ghosts.

Chakejian did not return requests for comment but his business partner, Randy Bates, said that the attraction is not meant to offend anyone. Bates said the “legend” of the Halloween attraction is based on fictional story about Dr. Heinrich Chakajian. The story goes that Dr. Chakajian performed experiments on prisoners in Eastern Europe and moved his operation to the Pennhurst site in the United States. Bates said this fictional story was created as a way to distance the attraction from the community of people who once lived there.

The Pennhurst Asylum attraction opened up in the fall of 2010, and Bates said that when he and his partner bought Pennhurst, they succeeded in preserving property that had been abandoned by the state.

The Halloween attraction includes a historical background of the facility. The museum is followed by the haunted house portion of the attraction.

Customers can also visit a former residential hall, known as the Mayflower building, to hunt for ghosts. Lastly, customers can tour some of the underground tunnels on the site.

* * * * *

DISABILITY RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Conroy still has a special place in his heart for Pennhurst, which officially closed its doors as an institution in 1987. He is the co-president of Pennhurst Memorial & Preservation Alliance, a nonprofit educational organization. When the organization formed in 2009, its board members envisioned a museum on the old grounds of the institution.

“Since the state sold the historic property to a private businessperson, that goal has been delayed, possibly permanently,” Conroy said. “The organization now works toward four primary goals.”

These goals include publishing a book about Pennhurst’s role in the disability rights movement. The Penn State University Press has agreed to publish the book, A World Apart: The Story of Pennhurst State School and Hospital.

“Our board members, and others, are now at work to complete our chapters by [next] September,” Conroy said. “The reviewing editors felt that this book will be a fitting addition to textbooks in disability studies programs nationally, as well as providing excellent reviews and little-known inside stories for a wider audience.”

Conroy said another goal is to present an exhibit at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. He said board members will be working with Constitution Center staff in 2013 to create an exhibit on the “little-known pivotal role of Pennhurst in the freedom movement of Americans with disabilities.”

After that, the board hopes to eventually convert the Constitution Center exhibit into a traveling exhibit, according to Conroy.

“The traveling exhibit would be offered to state capital buildings, museums, universities, and other public venues,” he said. “Its purpose will be to heighten awareness of the civil rights struggles of Americans with mental and physical disabilities over the centuries.”

The board also hopes to contribute to the eventual creation of an Americans with disabilities memorial and museum in Washington, D.C. Conroy said that the board hopes to gain national recognition from the Constitution Center exhibit and its travels. As a result, the board would like to “help lead a campaign for a national center designed to offer the history of the disability rights movement in America.”

1908
As early postcard shows the construction of a “residential institution for the feeble-minded and epileptics” in Spring City, Pennhurst was declared a “Site of Conscience” in 2008, honoring the struggles for justice that occurred there.

1918
North of the food service at Pennhurst was harried on the grounds. Here, ranks patients pick peas as part of a “training” regimen.

1922
Construction on the administrative building, pictured here in 1922, was completed in 1928. Today the building is used as a haunted attraction.

1987

1998
Portrait Photography: Mike Williams

The findings and decisions in the Pennhurst case “established that everyone, no matter what his or her disability, can live a regular life in the community and receive all the support they need there.”
Kevin Delaney’s book, Money at Work, has been critically acclaimed for its examination of how our jobs—and our money—shape our personalities.

By Charlotte Tucker
To many people, the notion of buying a $2,000 watch right after quitting a job is unthinkble. With no future income lined up, instinct usually tells us to save, save save.

But for one commissioned salesman interviewed in a new book by Temple professor and Vice Dean for Faculty Affairs Kevin Delaney, buying the watch was more than logical. It was an investment.

“The watch was a way of saying that he could make bold decisions,” Delaney said during office hours early in the fall semester. “It was to show he had confidence.”

The salesman and other profession- als whose careers revolve around money are the subject of Delaney’s latest book, Money at Work: On the Job with Priests, Poker Players and Hedge Fund Traders. The book has received an impressive amount of media attention since it was released in July. The Chronicle of Higher Education ran a feature, and the book was listed in the Wall Street Journal’s list of the Must-Read Wall Street Books of the Summer of 2012.

The book examines the ways in which money and our jobs shape our personalities. In some ways, Delaney—an economic sociologist by training—said, his research on the subject began when he was just a child.

His father, the sole breadwinner for a wife and five children, worked a number of jobs when Delaney was growing up. His tips from a Saturday night job parking cars at a country club would be doled out into stacks the next morning. One pile for someone’s shoes. Another pile for someone else’s school clothes.

“As a child, I was fascinated by how concrete that money was,” Delaney said. “The very tenor of life at home would change based on whether there were enough stacks to pay for the things the family needed.

“The feeling of the household was dependent on the size of the stack of dollars,” he said. “Enough money meant things were light-hearted, but you could feel it in the air if there wasn’t enough to go around.”

From that beginning, Delaney’s own life has taken him through a series of jobs with money at their core. He was a toll collector—where breaks were spent with other toll collectors talking about schemes to pocket the plentiful toll money that surrounded them (not that they ever did, Delaney hastened to add). In another job, as a bartender, money was much more immediate.

“It’s very easy to spend that [bar- tending] money,” he said. “It’s a money culture. It’s easily spendable. You tip lavishly because you always have tip money.”

Since then, money has become a less tangible part of Delaney’s jobs, but no less important. As a vice dean, he is tasked with looking at returns on invest- ment in various programs and questions of how the college’s money is best spent.

“My own view of money evolves across all these jobs,” he said. “My view of jobs takes Delaney’s own observations about the way various jobs changed the way he thought about money and delves deeper.

A sociologist at heart, Delaney found himself listening to people talk about money. He talked to hedge fund traders and commissioned salespeople, both of whom, he said, “were always talking about their time.”

“They’re constantly evaluating their time,” he said. “Am I spending my time wisely and correctly?” They might say, “This client, who I enjoy spending time with, is not buying much of my product, so am I investing my time wisely?”

“This line of questioning—of equating time with money—leads to a mindset that time spent not earning money is money lost,” Delaney said. And so a salesman might leave work at 6 p.m. and arrive home, but then spend an hour in his car making sales calls. He has learned that an investment of time will earn money.

“People are not just born with those personalities,” he said. “There is, of course, a certain kind of person who is attracted to those lines of work, but there is also a learning process that goes on in jobs.”

Professional poker players are another group Delaney focuses on in Money at Work, examining the ways they train themselves to dissociate from the chip values in their hands. He spent several days in Las Vegas, banging out with poker players and observing in poker rooms, and he found that poker players—much like hedge fund traders—must take the information available to them and make calculated risks. If they start to consider the value of the chips—that one chip could buy a car in some cases—those thoughts affect their play.

“They say things like, ‘chips are just something completely different at home.

“A fundraiser for a nonprofit organiza- tion might make a middle-class salary while traveling in a world of wealth and privilege. Those people must work con- stantly to stay on an even keel, Delaney said.

“Some development people learn to take that, others really struggle with what they can see as a lack of fairness. They are confronted with the fact that differences in wealth and income do ex- ist and they’re not always related to the amount of work a person does or how hard they work. It can be very hard for young fundraisers to deal with that.”

Such dissociation may work beauti- fully at the poker table, but it does skew the way one looks at the world, Delaney said. He once asked a poker player how much cash he usually carried. The player said he carried very little money. Then he pulled out his money clip and started counting. He had $2,700.

One thing that hedge funder traders and poker players have in common—if they’re good at their jobs—is that they have money. But Delaney also talked with people who work with money but do not bring home large amounts of it.

Fundraisers and those who disperse grant money can struggle because money can mean one thing at work and something completely different at home. A fundraiser for a nonprofit organiza- tion might make a middle-class salary while traveling in a world of wealth and privilege. Those people must work con- stantly to stay on an even keel, Delaney said.

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A Long Road to Graduation

Dr. Alfred Sellers interrupted his studies at Temple to serve in World War II. He was just a few credits shy of graduation in 1948 when he was accepted to medical school—effective immediately. Even after nearly 60 years as a successful cardiologist, he still wished he had his Temple degree.

By Cheryl Allison
On that afternoon, College of Liberal Arts Dean Teresa Soufas and Vice Dean for Academic Affairs Jayne Drake, in full academic regalia, conferred a bachelor of science degree in chemistry on Dr. Alfred Sellers, 88, as his sons, Joseph and David, as well as Dean Soufas and Vice Dean for Academic Affairs Jayne Drake, proudly looked on.

That diploma had been the missing piece in a life of remarkable achievement. An Army veteran of World War II and survivor of the grueling campaign of the Battle of the Bulge, Seller had been a Temple student, just a few credits shy of graduating in 1948, when he was admitted to start immediately at Duke Medical School. He went on to a nearly 60-year career in cardiology, as a professor and head of the Hypertensive Unit at the medical school, you’d better enlist." he remembers a military man told him. "Another reason, he said. "We used to put up bridges in the morning and take them down in the afternoon," he said.

At a camp in Pennsylvania’s Shenango Valley, awaiting transfer overseas, he recognized an officer who had worked at Einstein Hospital. "I told him, ‘I really want to be a doctor. I want to learn something,’ [from my service]," Sellers recalled.

"What was fun was that it was a backwards ceremony," the father was graduating as his two grown sons beamed with pride."
He was flown to a hospital in Wales, where his doctors had to amputate his feet. "I was hoping for a (different) life," he said.

He recovered, but was left with a continuing disability. He spent the rest of his service in England with others who could not return to combat, working for a time at a camp for German prisoners.

In late summer 1946, having been awarded a bronze star for valor, he shipped out for home. He arrived in New York City in the dead of night. He remembers calling home to Philadelphia. "Do you know what time it is?" his mother answered. When his train arrived in Center City, though, his whole family, "all my aunts, my mother," were waiting to greet him.

Two days later, Sellers was back in classes at Temple. "I knew if I didn't sign up, I would miss a semester," he said. Almost two years later, he was a few courses from finishing his interrupted degree when he received his acceptance letter from Duke. An uncle, an alumnus, had encouraged him to apply. At the time, the medical school would admit students who had completed 109 credits. He started at Duke that fall, going on to graduate first in his class with both a medical degree and a master's degree for his research into ischemic muscle pain, the first to his name.

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Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban and Richard Lobban honored at Gallery of Success

Variety and Success through the Liberal Arts By Maggie Reynolds

When Ellen Warner (CLA, ’70) looks back on her decision to come to Temple, she's struck by how easy it was. “It’s funny,” says Warner. “Of course that’s where I went. It’s where my friends went. It’s where everyone went. I didn’t really think about it at the time.”

Now, when she looks back on her history decades later, Warner marvels that one seemingly simple decision could set her on a path toward such a varied and fulfilling career. Reflecting on the 10-plus jobs she worked in a number of disparate industries, Warner attributes her success to a liberal arts background as well as the courage to go out and find the work that made her happy. “My liberal arts education prepared me for what I wanted to do,” she says.

Very few institutions offered courses in Latin American history in the late 1960s, says Warner, and she pursued the courses about which she was most passionate on the way to her degree. “I took the classes that I loved,” she says, “and was able to combine her own interests with the offerings at the College of Liberal Arts.

Warner recalls experiences outside of the classroom that were as significant as time spent in lecture halls. The enormous social upheaval of the late 1960s saw college students entering the stage of national politics in an unprecedented way, and Temple’s campus, says Warner, was no exception. She recalls times that the open space behind Mitt- en Hall was packed with student protesters. “The generation started to feel power over the frustration of the Vietnam War, and you could see the energy on campus. We finally felt that we could say something, that we could make a difference.”

For Warner, the sense of community that she experienced during her years at CLA was exemptified in Russell Conwell’s 1880 speech “Acres of Diamonds,” which she read as part of the mandatory literature for Temple freshmen. “It was absolutely foundational for me,” she says. Conwell’s resounding message that opportunity, achievement and fortune are found in one’s own community has defined Temple’s efforts for more than a century. That same mission prepared Warner for a dedicated life beyond the university.

Warner set out on an employment path that capitalized on her strengths in different ways. The choice to study liberal arts, says Warner, left her with a well-rounded background in many different areas and opened doors in many places. Her first stop was Rutgers University, where she earned her master’s degree in education in 1974. From there, she taught elementary school classes and English as a second language courses in the Camden area. “I loved it,” says Warner, who often extended her teaching hours to serve adult learners in nightclasses.

Transition is clearly something that Warner has specialized in and thrived under as a professional, and after moving back to Florida once again, Warner found herself working for Drake Beam Morin, providing outplacement, education and training for people in career transitions. After leaving DBM in 1997, Warner and her husband Mark opened The Alzheimer’s Store in Atlanta, Georgia. The store offers services tailored to the unique needs of Alzheimer’s patients. What makes the shop unique is that it also offers products specifically designed to support caregivers of those living with Alzheimer’s. Warner says that her work with the Alzheimer’s Store, helping families to help the people they love, has been her most treasured working experience to date.

“My jobs may make my heart sing,” says Warner, “and each job has been better than the last.”

For more information about the Liberal Arts, please visit: http://liberalarts.temple.edu
A Farm Grows in North Philly
By Nicholas Santalucia

With every warning not to stray too far from campus, then-freshman Alex Epstein (CLA ’13) only wanted to go further. It bothered him that such a wall existed between Temple students and their surrounding community, and his instincts told him to do the opposite. Epstein began to go on walks, introducing himself to the people he met and each time straying a bit further from Broad Street.

The disconnect he found between campus and the community was unsettling, and Epstein decided—as a freshman—that he would work on bringing the two closer together. Drawing on experience he’d gained working on similar projects in high school, Epstein planned a service trip to New Orleans. Temple students joined local high schoolers working in Katrina-stricken areas. The two groups clicked. Epstein didn’t want to let the relationships fade, so those original students formed the Philly Urban Creators (PUC).

PUC aims to be something progressive in North Philly by utilizing what students learned about urban farming in New Orleans and applying it here. “It took six months to figure ourselves out, and then a year of community organizing before we could really begin,” says Epstein. After securing usage permits from community organizations, additional resources from Temple, and general support from the community, Epstein and PUC began to build their farm in February of 2011. Once the weather warmed, they planted their first crop of common vegetables, including tomatoes, peppers and onions, all of which were used in their inaugural harvest feast.

What started as some compost bins put together with scrap materials now stands as the two-acre Life Do Grow Farm at 11th and Dakota.

Since then, PUC’s project has been incorporated into three local high schools’ curriculums and has hosted more than 200 Temple student volunteers. The garden has even become a favorite of the Magic Johnson Foundation. While touring the nation in search of promising non-profits, the Foundation was taken aback by the hands-on nature of the work at Life Do Grow as well as the diversity present in the volunteers working there. Students from local high schools, Temple Owls, and lifelong residents of the block all harvesting crops side-by-side proved a refreshing change of scenery for the foundation. Immediately after interviewing the crew on the farm, the Magic Johnson Foundation offered its full support to Epstein and PUC.

The group is now expanding to plots that have been offered by local churches and schools. In each case, the group stresses the importance of involving the local community. Epstein says the local community must be engaged with the project during the initial stages, rather than allowing an external group to do it. At 11th and Dakota, everyday students from fourth grade through college seniors meet after class to tend to their crops. Epstein also plans to begin working with at-risk-youth and ex-offender programs to educate them on the basics of urban farming. “If you have a 16 by 10 foot space, you can start a business,” Epstein explains. He knows firsthand that a small greenhouse is all it takes to grow a crop of microgreens like wheatgrass and pea sprouts that city restaurants will purchase.

Though Epstein will be graduating next winter with an interdisciplinary degree focusing in sociology and environmental studies, he knows he’ll continue work with Philly Urban Creators. “And we’ll always looking for interested people,” Epstein says, before plugging his website. (Philly-UrbanCreators.org)
Students and Philly Urban Creator volunteers gather at the Life Do Grow Farm at 11th and Dakota.