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News from the Wilson Center

The Wilson Center

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News from the Wilson Center

Transitions - Summer 2017



Dear Friends,

I can hardly believe that four years have passed since I started my work at the Wilson Center. Thanks to the wonderful students and the generous support of people like you, it has been a joy-filled, heart-filled time! Starting this month, my path will lead in a new direction. My family will be going on sabbatical to Costa Rica in August and I will be pursuing new career opportunities upon my return.

It is, of course, difficult to say goodbye to students and colleagues I have come to know and love, but my primary feeling during the last 6 weeks has been one of excitement. I have never left an organization feeling so positive and energized about its future. The Board has hired an amazing new director, Rev. Lauren Seganos Cohen, and it has been an honor to work with her in these transition weeks. You will be learning more about Lauren later in this

newsletter, but suffice it to say that she is smart, funny, articulate, talented and deeply committed to multifaith dialogue. Her connection with students was instantaneous and honest. I can't imagine a better individual to lead the Wilson Center!

My deepest thanks go out to the Wilson Center board, especially to our President, Dr. Phyllis Brazee, and to all of you for your ongoing support of our mission. The opportunities for spiritual growth and multifaith collaboration that the Wilson Center provides have never been more important than they are in today's world. Dorothy and the Rev. Elwin Wilson, the Rev. Elizabeth Morris and all the many chaplains and students involved in the center over the years have created something magical in this space and I am blessed to have been a part of it.

With love and appreciation,

Sarah.

New Wilson Center Director as of July 1, 2017

Rev. Lauren Seganos Cohen comes to the Wilson Center with a passion for higher education and multi-faith engagement. She was the inaugural Interfaith Service Coordinator at Juniata College in Pennsylvania, facilitating undergraduate opportunities for interfaith and intercultural engagement through community service. She earned a Master of Divinity at Andover Newton Theological School, where she was named a 2014-2015 Fellow in the Center for Inter-Religious and Communal Leadership Education. Lauren also worked with student leaders from a variety of faiths at The Memorial Church of Harvard University. Most recently she completed two units of Clinical Pastoral Education as an interfaith chaplain at Maine Medical Center, and she is currently the Spiritual Care Coordinator at Inland Hospital in Waterville. Lauren lives in Waterville with her husband and their dachshund puppy, Lily. You'll find her at the Wilson Center on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Lauren is thrilled to be joining the Wilson Center and looks forward to continuing the Wilson Center's work of working for peace by building bridges among diverse religious, spiritual, and ethical communities.



Lauren and Sarah at the Wilson Center Board of Directors Retreat in June

Multifaith Days of Service

Inspired by the recently convened group of UMaine Faith Leaders, our Multifaith Days of Service continued to be a successful new initiative this year. Multifaith Days of Service offer a chance for students from all faith traditions to gather together and be of service in the greater community. This year we volunteered with the Ronald McDonald House, the Solidarity Harvest (helping to make more than 1200 food boxes for families in need), Welcome to Housing (providing household goods and furniture to those who have been homeless and are moving back into housing), and participated in a beach clean-up project at Jackson Beach in Hermon. We look forward to continuing to find common ground through community service and serving others!



Do you have an idea or suggestion for a service project? Please contact our Director, Lauren Seganos Cohen at lauren.s.cohen@maine.edu or 866-4227.

“Can We REALLY Coexist?” Panel a Success!



Another product of the UMaine Faith Leaders meetings was a panel presentation in March. Entitled “Can we REALLY Coexist?,” this event brought together leaders from 7 different traditions (Protestantism, Catholicism, Native American Spirituality, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, and atheism) and invited them to address the tougher questions of religious diversity and coexistence in today’s world. More than 240 people

attended the event and both the discussion and the receptions before and after the event allowed those present to pose difficult questions and share their diverse perspectives with one another.

Many thanks to our co-sponsors:
The UMaine Office of Multicultural Student Life; Spiritual Coexistence Student Group; CRU UMaine; UMaine Intersivity; UMaine Navigators; UMaine Hillel; Muslim Student Association; Black Bear Catholic at the Newman Center; Life; The Wabanaki Center; The Islamic Center of Maine; Freedom from Religion Foundation



SCOPE Grants

The SCOPE grants for social justice and community service are given in honor of Rev. Elizabeth Morris, chaplain of the Wilson Center from 1990-1993.

This year's winners were...

Dylan and Andrew Smith are Anthropology majors, minoring in Native American studies. Dylan and Andrew wanted to provide an opportunity for students in the forestry, anthropology, and Native American studies programs to learn about traditional knowledge of forest resources. In Spring 2017 Dylan and Andrew Smith showed a group of students how to make a wigwam (a traditional Native American shelter) and other traditional skills such as foraging, making tea, cooking meat over a fire, weaving wampum, and making fishing nets. They also showed them how to make traditional tools like arrow heads, arrows, bows, hand axes, atlatls, and clubs.



Ming-Tso Chien is a Ph. D. student studying literacy education. Ming-Tso hopes to promote cultural diversity and cross-cultural understanding encourage family literacy, and empower parents as agents of family literacy. A work in progress, his project will aim to give parents an opportunity not only to recommend culturally appropriate children's books but also to create their own bilingual texts for their children and other children in the community.

SCOPE Grants continued...

Susan Smith is an interdisciplinary Ph. D. student focusing on the intersections of art, critical theory and activism. While working on a project devoted to the refugee crisis in Europe, she began to realize that displaced populations across the world were not very different. As people are displaced from their homes and must make new lives, Susan's project focuses on this idea of home, what home means to different people, and how that idea changes based on our personal experiences. She is currently working with various community partners in the area to create cardboard representations of their idea of home. Once completed, the houses will be on display at various galleries in Maine throughout the next year, including The Wilson Center!

Dorothy Clarke Wilson Peace Writing Prize

Dorothy Clarke Wilson was an internationally known peacemaker who was committed to writing on social issues and world peace. To encourage today's UMaine students to share in this commitment, Dorothy established a \$500 annual award for the most compelling written work on a peace-related topic. The 2017 topic was: "In this country, American means white. Everybody else has to hyphenate." –Toni Morrison, 1992

This year's winner was: Nina Mahaleris

Honorable mention: Yarissa Ortiz-Vidal

You can read both essays on our website at: <http://umaine.edu/wilsoncenter/peace-prizes-and-community-service-grants/>

Meet new Wilson Center staff!



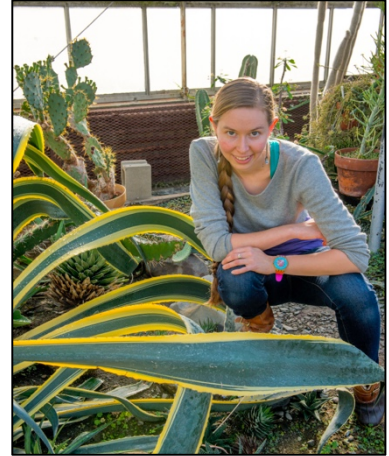
Hello everyone! My name is Emily Nocito, and I am pursuing two MS degrees here at the University of Maine- one in Marine Policy and one in Marine Biology. I moved from the tri-state area to Maine, and one of my biggest worries was finding a welcoming space for all religions and cultures. I was very excited to find the Wilson Center, and dove into their programming, especially the Wednesday night community dinners. This year, I will be the faculty advisor for the

undergraduate Spiritual Coexistence club, and will be assisting with new programming at the Wilson Center. When I'm not working on my degrees or at the Wilson Center, I work for the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth, as well as the director of 10 by 2020. I also love reading, hiking, baking and schmoozing.

"You are not obligated to complete the work; neither are you free to desist from it" Pirkei Avot 2:21

Wilson Center Staff continued...

Hello, my name is Sonja Birthisel. I am a PhD student at UMaine in the Ecology and Environmental Sciences program, with a research focus in sustainable agriculture. I am a longtime member of the SpiritualiTEA discussion group, and I am excited to branch out into a new role at the Wilson Center this year, coordinating the SCOPE Social Justice Grants and Peace Writing Prize programs. Some of my favorite things include gardening, cooking with friends, dancing, and reading by the woodstove.



Hi, I'm Russell Fascione. I'm a fourth-year undergrad in Psychology. I've been attending Wilson Center events for almost 4 years now. I love connecting with everyone over good food, fun activities, and inspiring dialogue! In addition to cooking Wednesday night dinners here, I'm a Co-president for the UMaine Spiritual Coexistence Student Group (find us on Facebook!) and an Outreach Assistant for the Counseling Center. I hope to see you here at the Wilson Center sometime!

My Reflections on the Wilson Center

Written by Baidehi Roy, student representative to the Wilson Center Board of Directors, and PhD student in Forestry Resources

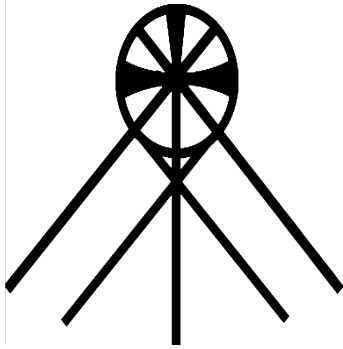
"Since I joined the University of Maine (Orono) last fall, the Wilson Center has been for me and many other students – a place to relax... to share thoughts... to cleanse oneself of work pressure. The Wilson Center is a unique confluence of ideas, generations and cultures. Community members, students and people from all religious faiths and beliefs gather under the roof of this one organization to share ideas, discuss dense topics and find ways forward for society. We also enjoy wonderful hand-cooked and love-filled meals on every Wednesday gathering. My recent meetings with the fellow members of the spiritual coexistence student group and the wonderful board members of the Wilson Center has convinced me that goodness and humanity still has hope, and organizations like the Wilson Center have a pivotal role to play, in bringing together people from various walks of life and joining them in love and oneness of spirit."

The Wilson Center

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67 College Ave
Orono, ME 04473

Bulk Mail Permit
No. 1009
Orono, ME
04473



Phone: 207-866-4227 **Email:** wilsoncenterorono@maine.edu

Web: umaine.edu/wilsoncenter **Facebook:** [wilsoncenter.mca](https://www.facebook.com/wilsoncenter.mca)



The mission of the Wilson Center is to create progressive, ecumenical, and multifaith dialogue for the University of Maine community and through worship, study, and service to work for social justice, honor diversity, and offer opportunities for spiritual growth.

The Wilson Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, funded by private grants and donations from individuals like yourselves.

Please consider supporting our work!

Contributions can be made through the Donate Now button on our website: umaine.edu/wilsoncenter or can be mailed to the Wilson Center at 67 College Avenue, Orono, ME 04473