

St. Olaf social work graduates are firmly rooted in the timeless values of service, social justice, integrity and competence.

By Carole Leigh Engblom
PHOTOGRAPHS BY Tom Roster

E RIN SWANSON '07 TOOK A SOCIAL POLICY CLASS during her sophomore year as part of her social work course requirements. The class examined policy formation and the political process as a strategy for achieving social and economic justice for at-risk populations. It helps future social workers to understand policies by which they are often guided that regulate publicly and privately funded programs, including welfare, Medicare and federal housing assistance. At the time she was in the course, Swanson — like every St. Olaf social work major — was taking a critical look at herself, asking some hard questions, examining her biases and challenging herself to better understand life's complexities.

"While we, as social workers, are supposed to embody the values of service, social justice, dignity and the inherent worth of people, let's face it, we're all human," says Swanson. But every time she attended class, "I was reminded of who I was supposed to be. When I caught myself being intolerant or giving in to prejudice and discrimination, I remembered what I stood for."

quote in the course syllabus attributed to the late Minnesota Senator Paul Wellstone encouraged students toward social action: "We may not prevent bad policy from being enacted, but we can prevent bad policy from being enacted without opposition." Even though Swanson was aware that federal and state government policy impacts the social work profession as well as the lives of countless individuals and families, it wasn't until she spent her senior spring break in New Orleans — helping with reconstruction efforts as part of Ole Spring Relief II — that she fully understood the impact of government policy on the people around her.

"I learned that the poor and African-American populations

"The profession speaks to my

core values and beliefs

in social justice, human dignity,

socioeconomic equality and

racial equity." — ANNA STEEL '07

were disproportionately affected by Hurricane Katrina," Swanson explains. "They tended to live in low lying areas which were more intensely flooded during the storm. The government offered little help to these people during the clean-up efforts, and it has tried to get rid of some of the much needed public housing."

Swanson also learned about fear from these residents — fear that the rebuilding effort would push them out of their homes, fear that they might lose their neighborhoods.

The storm and its chaotic aftermath "brought to light racism

and classism," says Swanson, who is currently interning with Lutheran Coalition for Public Policy in Minnesota, assisting with hunger and global warming initiatives. "My experiences in New Orleans empowered me to fight for justice and equality in policy."

Nearly 30 years before Erin Swanson came to St. Olaf, Rob MacDougall '79 was becoming involved in community social action and also trying to better understand the world in which he lived.

MacDougall grew up in Racine, Wisconsin. As a student at Washington Park High School, he participated in leadership groups that worked on interracial dialog, and he remembers feeling the effects of racial and social injustice when talking with friends who were African American or gay.

"Significant social and political activities seemed to occur every day," he says. The draft ended the year he turned 18, American troops were being withdrawn from Vietnam and, closer to home, a statewide teacher's strike had the school system in turmoil.

"I was a product of the times," says MacDougall, pastor of First Congregational United Church of

Christ in Menomonie, Wisconsin. "I walked with my teachers on the picket line, I cheered when the war ended, I participated in bringing food to the hungry."

St. Olaf College was a good fit for MacDougall, who chose social work as a major because he

"recognized that it could offer me both theoretical knowledge and the professional skills I needed to be effective in serving people and communities."

The Social Work Program was gaining momentum on campus. Two years earlier, professors James Stewart, chair of the St. Olaf Sociology Department, and Paul Steen, who had a similar position at Augsburg College in Minneapolis, had applied for a Mardag Foundation grant to fund a Joint Program in Social Work. Sandra Stumme was teaching the social work classes already instituted at St. Olaf. Naurine Lennox '64, who shaped and developed the program and became its first fulltime professor, succeeded Stumme that year. Lennox's expertise was (and still is) rural social work, families experiencing poverty and social ministry. She shared these passions with her earliest students, among them St. Olaf Social Work Professor Mary Carlsen '79, St. Olaf Principal Gifts Officer Barry Carlson '79 and Rob MacDougall.

THE CLASS OF 2007. Social work seniors were honored by professors Naurine Lennox and Mary Carlsen during the annual Kimer tea in late May. From left (back row), Wendy Harig, Sarah Thukral, Elizabeth Frosch, Naurine Lennox, Katie Jadin, David Thews, Lauren Henkel and Mary Carlsen; (front row) Katie Dybdahl, LeCresha Payne, Erin Swanson and Valerie Chriske (not pictured: Anna Steel). PHOTO BY DAVID GONNERMAN '90



MacDougall studied social justice with Stewart. From Lennox, MacDougall learned about social work practice. He spent a semester working with people who were chemically dependent at a Milwaukee youth services agency. But it was Paul Wellstone, he says, who made the biggest impression on him. At the time, Wellstone was a professor of political science at neighboring Carleton College and taught classes in community organization. Hundreds of Carleton and St. Olaf students, including MacDougall, were instructed by Wellstone in the theory and practice of grassroots organization and were then sent out to Minnesota communities to practice what they had learned. These things propelled MacDougall toward his vocation — social justice — and ultimately, into the ministry.

SOCIAL JUSTICE, SOCIAL SERVICE, SOCIAL WORK

reparing graduates for social service is deeply ingrained in the heritage and mission of St. Olaf College. Sitting atop a hill known to "Oles" as Manitou Heights, St. Olaf has long been fertile ground for fledgling social workers. In 1932, before engaging in her "life's big work" as a professor of history and role model to countless St. Olaf students, Professor Agnes Larson '16 was involved with social work in Chicago.

Since St. Olaf's founding in 1874, this liberal arts college of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has challenged its students to think critically, express themselves articulately, examine their values, serve others, be global citizens and understand the interrelatedness of God, humankind and the earth.

In 1994, St. Olaf ended its joint collaboration with Augsburg College and met national Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards as an independent social work program. Despite accreditation from the Council on Social Work Education and its continuing popularity as a major for young men and women looking to effect social change and serve diverse communities, there were cloudy days ahead. In 1998, staff and program cuts threatened the existence of social work at St. Olaf.

The state of Minnesota established the license for social work, and to be licensed, it is necessary for a social worker to graduate from an accredited program. "Those making the cuts decided to drop the accreditation, which is restrictive and

expensive," explains Lennox. "But without accreditation there was no reason for a program." Alumni, faculty and students, in particular, made an impassioned case for social work and the decision to eliminate the program was reversed.

Today, the Social Work Program is exceptionally strong and, says Lennox, "the healthiest it has ever been."

In 2009 and 2010 there will be a record number of social work graduates. Lennox believes

students are gravitating more toward international opportunities and larger, policymaking positions.

"Some students are always interested in one-to-one work, especially with children,

youth and families," she says. "That will always be true, thankfully. But we encourage students to find their own place in the social work profession, and it offers them an exceptionally broad range of choices."

— ROB MACDOUGALL '79

"I think our students are much more interested in what we call 'macro' level practice — policy, administration, research, community work — than they were when I was a student here," says Mary Carlsen, chair of the newly named Department of Social Work and Family Studies. "We have consciously worked to operationalize our mission to prepare generalist practitioners, that is, people who can put their knowledge to use with not only individuals and families, but with groups, organizations and whole communities."

The college has a near perfect record of graduates in social work passing the licensure examination for the State of Minnesota for baccalaureate social workers. St. Olaf social work majors are admitted into the top graduate schools in social work, law and public policy, including Columbia University, the Humphrey School of Public Policy, the University of Chicago, New York University, the University of Seattle and Washington University, among others. Carlsen says graduates have gone on to careers in policy, research, public health, ministry and teaching, as well as social work practice in mental health, housing, aging, child welfare, HIV/AIDS, adoption, hospice and public social services. They practice in Moldova, Mexico, Uruguay, England, Nepal and China, among other countries.

"The profession speaks to my core values and beliefs in social justice, human dignity, socioeconomic equality and racial equity," says Phi Beta Kappa Anna Steel '07, who is living in New York City and working as an investigator for the Civilian Complaint Review Board, evaluating claims of police misconduct.

Each year, St. Olaf social work majors provide more than 6,000 hours in service to local human service agencies (figuring an average of 12 students with a 400-hour field practicum and a 100-hour senior project). Their practicums and projects are diverse and meaningful. Lauren Henkel '07 spent her practicum working with special education students at Bridgewater



"Social work is hard work — not for the lazy, not for the faint of heart. But it is a flexible profession, with opportunities to match individual abilities and strengths." - NAURINE LENNOX '64

Elementary School in Northfield. David Thews '07 learned how to engage involuntary clients in anger management groups at a family violence program in Northeast Minneapolis. Katie Dybdal '07

involved young siblings with newborn care as part of her senior project, "Sibling Preparation in the Special Care Nursery," at Fairview Ridges Hospital in Burnsville.

Elizabeth Frosch '07 explored health policies on a county, state and national level at District One Hospital in Faribault, Minnesota, and served as the hospital social worker when her supervisor stepped off the floor.

"The interplay between social work, public policy and public health will guide my career path and likely influence the type of program I pursue in graduate school," says Frosch, who recently applied for an AmeriCorps position with the AIDS Partnership in Washington, D.C.

"Mary Carlsen and Naurine Lennox taught me first how to love and understand myself, then to respect the community in which I live." - LACRESHA PAYNE '07

Students are encouraged to look at every course in the academic catalog when choosing classes to support the social work major. In addition to their full course load that emphasizes the liberal arts perspective (history, philosophy, literature and the fine arts, as well as sociology, psychology, political science and economics), social work majors are encouraged to encounter the multiplicity of cultures in the world through International and Off-Campus study programs and be proficient in a foreign language.

"I can make a case for any course at St. Olaf being relevant to a student becoming a great social worker," says Lennox, who even designed an Interim course titled "I Want to Help People." "It's a funny name, but it does the job we want it to do," she says. "It attracts first- and second-year students who can relate to that statement and appreciate learning how they can help people in a variety of ways with the many liberal arts-based majors and concentrations at St. Olaf."

ROLE MODELS

welve years after Naurine Lennox was hired in 1977 as St. Olaf's first full-time social work professor, Mary Carlsen joined her on the faculty. While a dozen adjunct social work faculty have come and gone since the early 1980s,

> Carlsen and Lennox remain constant, co-anchors of the Social Work Program. As professional social workers, their peers respect them. As outstanding educators, their students love them.



Truly improving human lives often requires more than a kind heart. The best social workers are liberally educated, rigorous in their thinking and compassionate. This is the preparation students receive at St. Olaf." — MARY CARLSEN '79

"Mary Carlsen and Naurine Lennox taught me first how to love and understand myself, then to respect the community in which I live," says LaCresha Payne '07.

Lennox is about to go on her fourth sabbatical, this time to prepare in two areas for her teaching responsibilities in Cuernavaca, Mexico, in the spring of 2008. She has a passion for rural Mexico and even though she's been there a number of times in the past 10 years, she's honing her Spanish-speaking skills and learning all she can about the people, history and social service agencies in and around Cuernavaca. Her spring course in Cuernavaca will address policies related to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the environment, healthcare, the child

welfare system and Mexico's version of U.S. Social Security law. "Our students will want to know about this," she says.

"Naurine is astute, humble, ethical and smart. She is a social worker in her soul and an Ole in her integrity," says Carlsen. "She taught me (nearly) everything I know about the 'art' of social work teaching and practice. She has mentored my development as a student, practitioner, teacher, administrator and researcher."

Carlsen has focused in different areas of social work than Lennox. Professionally, she serves on several ethics committees and focuses her research on end-of-life care and decision-making. Her work in HIV/AIDS includes helping to develop Clinic 42, an HIV clinic in Minneapolis. After serving as a policy fellow with the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota and as a visiting scholar at the University of East London during her 2002–03 sabbatical, Carlsen is actively engaged with the international palliative care community of social workers.

Carlsen advises St. Olaf students on courses or a major that she believes might capture their gifts and passions. She works on departmental policy that will allow faculty to spend more time with students and less on administrative work. She listens to a social work major talk about her worry for a friend's well being and points her in a direction where she can get further help. She also helps students learn what knowledge, skills and ethical reflection will enable them to help individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities improve.

But mostly she leads by example.

"I've been taught that social work is not just a job or career, but rather a way of thinking and a way of life," says former student David Thews.

GOING FORWARD

here was no social work program at St. Olaf when Robert Munson '64 was on the Hill; he graduated with majors in sociology and psychology. Following President John F.



Kennedy's challenge to be of service to the world, Munson joined the Peace Corps and served two years in

rural Venezuela before earning his masters in social work from George Williams College at Aurora University in Chicago. As a social worker, Munson served with the Big Brothers organization, Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota and was director of emergency services for the Twin Cities chapter of the American Red Cross before he retired.

— ROBERT MUNSON '64

Now he teaches Red Cross classes that inform people of international humanitarian law, noting "It is still the best deterrent to inhumane treatment of noncombatants during an international conflict."

"Each of these settings have afforded me the opportunity to work in organizations which are in line with my life values," says Munson, whose expertise is in disaster mental health and family reunification. During his active response service, Munson was on a select roster for the national Critical Incident Response Team. Among many mass-casualty disaster responses, Munson served international families in New York City and Washington, D.C. following 9/11.

"I've always felt that my work was more of a fulfillment of a life-mission rather than just a job," he says.

On August 1 of this year, catastrophe struck when the Interstate 35W bridge in Minneapolis collapsed without warning into the Mississippi River — just down the street from the American Red Cross offices where Munson has spent the past 16 years. In addition to emergency first responders and heroic volunteers, Red Cross workers acted quickly, handling inquiries from family members outside the disaster area, providing blood to disaster victims, feeding emergency workers and more.

Upon learning of the bridge collapse, Munson went immediately to the scene of the disaster and did what St. Olaf graduates do best — he helped people.

Carole Leigh Engblom is editor of St. Olaf Magazine.

Social Work Graduates Are Heeding the Call

BY CAROLE LEIGH ENGBLOM

St. Olaf social work graduates are some of the best in their fields at assessing human needs. "They are leaders," says Social Work Professor Mary Carlsen '79, "because they know how to write, speak publicly, recognize the historical context in which they're working and think in an ethical dimension. It's exciting to see our students mature, and a joy to see them grow as critical thinkers, reflective practitioners and confident adults."



Fostering Hope

A passion for adoption and a determination to "believe in what you do" drew Wendy Harig '07 to the St. Olaf Social Work Program. She quickly discovered that it was a perfect fit not only with her own values, but also with the college mission that encourages its students and alumni to life "lives of worth and service." The intimacy of the program was an added bonus.

"Professors and peers come to know each other so well, and

there is such a great dynamic and respect," says Hariq, the 2007 Kimer Award recipient (see page 55) and one of 11 social work majors who graduated this past spring.

"The classes are intense and full of depth, and our field practicum is the



most amazing experience. In our class alone we did our practicums in hospitals, mental health, schools, immigrant services and anger management services," she says. "It is such an advantage to do this at the same time as your classmates and to be able to discuss the issues with them."

"Passion and goals are very important, but getting sidetracked along the way can be the best learning experience."

- WENDY HARIG '07

Harig's interest in children's issues deepened as a result of her senior project and practicum, both done at the Rice County Day Treatment Center. The agency provides education and mental health services to children in grades K through 12 and their families, and is funded by the Northfield and Faribault school districts and Rice County Social Services.

"During my practicum I mostly worked with eight elementary school children who struggled with diverse environmental and mental health issues. Each experience challenged me to apply my skills, look at client individuality and learn how to work in a team setting," she explains.

Her goal is to continue to work with young people. "I want to hear their stories, their hopes, and most of all empower them."

Finding Her Way

Valerie Chriske '07 has wanted to help people for as long as she can remember. Following through on childhood aspirations to become a missionary, or perhaps a lawyer or a health professional, Chriske discovered that majoring in social work would allow her not only to combine these passions but also to provide her with a variety of career options.

"I don't think people are aware of the vast work opportunities that social workers have," says Chriske, who speaks Spanish fluently and currently is working at the Northfield Community Action Center, primarily with the Latino community. "I can look for jobs in schools, hospitals, with the county and nongovernment organizations, with nonprofits, at law offices,

"Social work is hard work, challenging for both the mind and soul, but is also very rewarding."

— VALERIE CHRISKE '07

mental health institutions, nursing homes and more."

Chriske admits she's still discovering what career will be the best fit. The possibilities are limitless and her interests lie in crosscultural and international work, public policy, criminal law and family justice. She also spent a summer working in a nursing home as a



certified nursing assistant and loved it. This fall Chriske returns to her hometown of Appleton, Wisconsin, where she will apply to Lutheran Volunteer Corps for service in India and Kenya.

"Social work has taught me to be contemplative, thoughtful, intuitive and discerning," she says. "My faith is also an important part of who I am, and social work has given me a means to carry out my faith in a way that I feel in my heart is right."



Taking God's Lead

Conversations about vocation and "calling" tend to happen naturally at St. Olaf. David Thews '07 says he spent his first two years on campus "taking a journey through several departments and programs in search of a major" while participating in these important conversations.

A turning point came when Thews became one of six students selected to participate in the Urban Pilgrimage to New York Interim, led by Professor Emeritus of Religion Vern Faillettaz and his wife, Billi, a nurse and St. Olaf counselor. The program, sponsored by the Lilly Foundation grant "Lives of Worth and Service," allows students to see how urban congregations develop programs to meet the needs of its congregants and neighbors. Each student was assigned to a different pastor/mentor and parish. Thews worked with Rev. Paul Block '93, pastor of the predominantly Puerto Rican church Transfiguration in the Bronx.

The experience had a profound impact on him. "We had very meaningful discussions about vocation and calling, domestic and

Social workers taught at St. Olaf have had the opportunity to consider spirituality and faith as a part of their own lives and the lives of their clients, which can enrich and expand the possibilities for work and education beyond college."

— DAVID THEWS '07

global urban issues, and the changing role of the Christian — and more specifically — Lutheran church in the world," says Thews. His "call" to the field of social work came that year.

Thews initially had common misconceptions about social workers, believing that social workers only worked for the government or only placed children in foster care. "Since then, I've found that there is a wide variety of fields and settings, and training in social work can also

provide a wonderful foundation for other careers," he says.

Thews is currently working for the Steinbruck Center for Urban Studies in Washington, D.C. through Lutheran Volunteer Corps. After that, he intends to go to graduate school and divinity school and pursue social work through the ministry. Wherever God leads him, he's sure to follow.

Gift of Compassion

"Most of the people I know think that social workers are the ones that remove children from homes and put them in foster care," says LaCresha Payne '07. But it is public policy and criminal justice that most interest her. "I have a passion for child welfare policy. I want to work with delinquent children."

Social work professors Mary Carlsen and Naurine Lennox emphasize to students the importance of knowing ones self before she or he can help someone else. The values and ethics of social work resonated with Payne, who learned first "how to love and understand myself, then to respect the community in which I live."

During her college career, Payne sang in the Gospel Choir and actively participated in the student organizations CUBE (Cultural

Awareness for Black Expression) and Harambee, which brings multicultural issues and concerns to the Student Senate.

"Her leadership was not just about programs and ideas, but about people and matters of the heart and life," says Bill Green '77, director of "My passion lies with troubled children and youth because I believe those are the ones that people give up on."

— LACRESHA PAYNE '07

Multicultural Affairs and Outreach at St. Olaf. "She challenged her peers to make a difference in life and in the community."

Payne's senior project and practicum took her to the Rice County (Minnesota) Department of Community Corrections where

she interned as a juvenile probation officer. The department works closely with police, schools, victim and youth service agencies, social services and community groups to create programs for offenders and victims. Her most memorable experience was working with the juveniles.

"Just having one-on-one client contact was most rewarding to me," says Payne, who also evaluated the Quest Extended



Day program. "The mindset that we have as social work majors set us apart from other students because we look at the world through the eyes of people living a different life."

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CELEBRATE

30 Years of Social Work at St. Olaf SATURDAY, SEPT. 29, AS PART OF HOMECOMING & FAMILY WEEKEND

stolaf.edu/ depts/social-work

COMING HOME

In 1974 the moving stopped. Steve felt a strong pull to return home to Northfield, where his parents and several family members still lived. He followed the footsteps of his father, Carl Rudyard ("Cully") Swanson '25, to St. Olaf. A hall-of-fame quarterback at the college, Cully later taught English, then served as dean of men and head of men's admissions, and later led the St. Olaf admissions department.

Judy struggled to make peace with a quieter life in Northfield, but being an Ole helped her adjust. She was glad to be near her college mentors, Arnold Flaten '22, St. Olaf professor of art, and architect and Professor Ed Sovik '39, who taught drafting.

Flaten reviewed Judy's portfolio and recommended her to Augsburg Fortress, the publisher for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. She started designing book covers "between doing the laundry and the cooking and watching the kids," she says. Sometimes, after putting the children to bed, she would work all night and drive a book cover to Minneapolis in the morning — on no sleep.

Today, each of the strong-willed Swanson children is self-employed. They wander in and out of their parents' house on St. Olaf Avenue, three blocks from where Scott and Lynette live with their three sons.

Scott describes Christmas Fest as "the best

job I have all year. I can work independently, and I don't have to work around other people's schedules."

The Swanson sons' talent for overcoming any construction challenge allows Judy to use her imagination — including conjuring up enormous Romanesque arches they raised for the backdrop to Christmas Fest a few years ago. She works like an architect, showing Scott and Noel graphed drawings and letting them erect the framework, shape the images, paint the sets and keep the project on schedule.

LIGHTING THE DARKNESS

A lthough the physical labor is condensed into a month, Judy starts her work the previous January, helping the conductors and Pastor Benson decide on the next Christmas Fest theme. She carefully considers the theme and musical texts to cull their essence in the design. "We're not just decorating for Christmas," she says. "We're creating a visual message that will help people appreciate the richness of the music."

"For God so Loves the World," the theme of the 2006 festival, offered the comforting message that, despite wars abroad and divisiveness in the United States, God has not abandoned us. The garland of golden leaves symbolizes the "wonderful arc of God's care and love," Judy says, serving to remind us that "God provides all we need. The world is a

treasure we need to take care of."

Benson consults Judy before writing his poetry for the introduction of the festival program. "She has a great theological understanding," he says. "I've learned a lot about Christmas festival themes from talking to Judy."

The design for Christmas Fest is like a glove without a hand until the Sunday after Thanksgiving. Judy typically sits in the corner assembling banners as the choirs enter the stage for the first mass choir rehearsal. At last she hears the music and tells herself, "Oh, that's why we're doing this."

"It's the most wonderful, restorative time," she says.

On opening night, she stands at the back of the auditorium and assesses the flaws in her work, like any artist with high standards. Then, before the doors close, she slips into the lobby, away from the set that shimmers under the lights, and listens to the music with her eyes closed. "Christmas is the darkest time of the world for us in the Northern Hemisphere," she says. "We relate to the dark places of our inner being and beg for light in that darkness. The choirs and the orchestra do not disappoint."

Nor does the thoughtful set, which never gives away that a referee's whistle sounded harshly here only days before.

Elizabeth Child runs a communications and marketing firm in Northfield.

HEEDING THE CALL [CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20]

The Amanda Kimer Award for Excellence in Social Work

Amanda Kimer

When Amanda Kimer passed away from natural causes in 1996 during her junior year at St. Olaf, the Social Work Program lost one of its most promising students.

"Amanda was a positive individual, a shining personality," says Social Work Professor Mary

Carlsen '79. "Her smile was warm and genuine. She looked forward to working with people in real need ... the poor, those on the margins of our society."

The Amanda Kimer Award was established to honor

a social work senior who best exemplifies the hard work, passion to serve others and sense of humor that Amanda possessed.

Wendy Hariq '07 is the most

recipient. "Wendy's performance with the Rice County Day Treatment Program during her field practicum and in her senior project with young people who have mental illness was exemplary," says Carlsen. "Her commitment to the field of social work is deep and we

are certain she will prove to be a leader in her career."

"It was an honor to receive the Kimer Award," says Harig, who intends to use the award money to help pay the cost of taking her bachelor's level licensure

exam. "Amanda is remembered by the social work faculty, her family and friends as a truly amazing young woman. It is extremely flattering to be seen to possess similar characteristics."



Wendy Harig (center) was honored with her award at the annual Kimer tea in May. She was joined by her parents John and Joan Harig (back left and right) and also by Amanda Kimer's mother, Barb (front left) and grandmother, Hazel Smith (front right).

Kimer Award winners include:

Bentley Durband '97 Julie Holligshead '97 Daniel Struebing '99 The Class of 2000 Shannon Beck '01 Lindsey Nelson '02 Elizabeth Van Arnam '03 Abigail Love '04 Mee Yang '04 Brandi du'Monceaux '05 Joy Scott '06 Wendy Harig '07 NAMARINIOS CIVAC