



Variety Shows

College Radio — Something For Everyone Listening

Photographs By CLOE POISSON



The UNH Stable gets together, on air at WNHU radio at the University of New Haven, Mondays through Thursdays from 4 to 6 p.m. to talk about news in and around campus. From left, Sean Malone, 21, of Bohemia, N.Y. at the controls, Katelyn Clark, 21 of Warwick, R.I., Heather Schnabel, 21 of Wurstboro, N.Y., Nicky Fauteux, 21 of Enfield and Ileana Alvarez-Diaz, 19, of New Haven.

The voices you heard reading the news on the local college station this morning or shouting out the final minutes of the basketball game last night might very well be the national radio personalities of tomorrow.

Whether they have shiny new equipment or broadcast from an unused equipment closet, college radio stations usually attract a fascinating mix of personalities including long-time community voices, insomniacs, alt-rock geeks, media students, armchair psychologists and opinionated activists. But no matter what their mix of programming is this week, month or year, they are delightfully different from the commercial mainstream market – as undeniably local as the neighborhood bar or mom-and-pop deli.



Drug and alcohol counselor Robert Girard, center, co-hosts a show called "Psych Word" with fellow counselor Tina Gilbertie, left, and Lauren Lombardi, right, on WUNH radio at the University of New Haven. The show is on Fridays from 3 to 4 p.m.

WNHU, 88.7-FM UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAVEN

Broadcast radio may conjure images of 1980s teenagers dancing to a boombox. But the truth is, even with the likes of Pandora and satellite radio, kids 12 to 18 miss the personal touch of a local disc jockey and are turning their backs on the Internet.

So says Bryan Lane, general manager of WNHU, 88.7 FM, the popular radio station based at the University of New Haven.

"That age group is the largest growing broadcast radio audience; it's an upturn in the last 10 years," Lane said in an interview at the station, currently in the basement of Maxcy Hall but soon to move to new digs in a small house near campus.

Most college radio stations are either National Public Radio affiliates or completely student-run. WNHU is a hybrid of community volunteers and students playing an interesting mix of ethnic music like Slavic, Irish or Italian, news and information about campus doings, as well as oldies, hip-hop and Broadway show tunes.

"I really like that it's student run, pretty much. It

gives us hands-on experience and a chance to learn and grow," said Katelyn Clark, operations manager and music director, who is a junior communication major at UNH. "We learn how to DJ, do promotions, we learn how radio works, how to set up remotes, as well as advertising, scheduling, how to train other DJs and manage a staff."

Clark, who'd like to manage a radio station when she graduates, works about 20 hours a week, in addition to her studies. She's one of 35 to 50 students who work at the station each year, a significant percentage of the 4,400 undergraduates at the school.

Listeners seem to love the station, voting it best college radio station in the New Haven *Advocate's* best of poll for 20 out of the past 25 years, Lane said. Loyal fans donate to the annual call-a-thon raising \$15,000 to \$28,000 a year.

In addition, WNHU has a larger reach than most college stations – its station broadcasts in about a 30-mile radius, from New Haven to Waterbury. People also tune in from Europe to Charger Radio, UNH's Internet-based programming.

"I feel like I'm getting real world experience, I'm on live air, it's not a practice session," said Nicky Fauteux,

a senior communication major who interviews UNH newsmakers on an afternoon talk show. "It's given me so much confidence."

Station manager Lane requires the students hosting the 4 p.m. program to show up at 3 p.m. to prepare.

"They need to understand that when Howard Stern goes on the air, golden nuggets don't just drop from his mouth," Lane said.

With a waiting list of community volunteers eager to host a show, and plenty of student involvement, WNHU shows that radio is alive and well.

"I don't agree with people who say radio is dead or dying," Clark said. "If anything, it's changing. You can listen on your phone or computer. It's a passive medium that you can enjoy while you're doing other things like driving in the car. It will always be relevant."

— ALIX BOYLE

WCNI, 90.9-FM CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

For the Love of Music. That's WCNI's motto and if you're a music lover, you'll no doubt want to turn to 90.9 when you're in the New London area. With an eclectic mix ranging from funk to polka; heavy metal to folk; and indie rock to blues, Connecticut College's commercial-free radio station literally offers something for everybody.

"All the music we play at the studio is happy music," says longtime DJ Ray Szymanski who's been co-hosting his show *Polka Jam* on Thursday nights from 6 to 9 p.m. with his wife, Mary, for 12 years. "But if you don't happen to like our show all you have to do is come back in three hours and there will be something completely different."

And therein lies the reason why college radio stations all over the country have been able to survive in the age of powerful commercial stations, satellite radio and of course the Internet and iPods. Diversity is the name of WCNI's game and whether it's polka or pulsating house music, the station spins lots of choices for those who aren't satisfied with commercial radio.

"People are recognizing that there is more alternative music that doesn't necessarily get out in other venues," says John Tyler who has been volunteering at the station, first as a DJ and now as its community general manager, for almost 20 years. He estimates that more than 60 percent of CNI's music can't be found on commercial radio. "And college radio is the place to find it."

The radio station started when Connecticut College was still a women's-only institution as a student club in the 1960s on a barely audible AM frequency. It was a 10-watt station called Palmer Radio in those days and



Dayna McCoubrey, 21, a senior from Wakefield, Mass., has a Friday afternoon show "The Alternative Choice" on WCNI. McCoubrey joined the station after writing a story about it for the school's student newspaper.

only those on the hill in New London were able to pull the signal. A little more than 10 years ago it upgraded to its current 2,000 watts.

The upgrade coupled with interest from the local community has transformed this station from a coed only enterprise to a true voice in New London and many surrounding towns.

"It's an important part of the New London community," says Peter Detmold who has been hosting *Dead Air Radio* for three decades. "People have always embraced it and it's been something those of us who aren't interested in commercial radio can always count on."

Though the station is located on the campus of Connecticut College and partially funded by the institution, it is run primarily by community volunteers who make up about 85 percent of the staff.

"It's ironic," says Detmold who also plays in the regionally famous pub rock band *The Reducers*. "Even though the genre is called college radio, the community appreciates CNI much more than the college community as a whole does."

This is at least partially because of its commitment to nurturing talent from its own backyard.

"We are very active in the local music scene," says Tyler. "We have about a half dozen local DJs who are members of local bands and we have a local music section in our record library."

There are also several shows that appeal to a variety of ethnic populations in the area. "It's an important service," says Szymanski. "We have Irish, Polish and Spanish shows just to name a few and you can't get that on commercial radio."

Detmold sums up why WCNI keeps rockin': "The station is neat. It's an old-school radio station. There are no limits and no formatting. It's sort of outlaw."

And New London loves that.

— AMY STARENISER LEE



WQAO, 98.1-FM QUINNIPIAC RADIO

At a university where communications is one of the biggest departments on campus, perhaps it's no surprise that dozens of students are involved with the student radio station. Greg Rava, general manager this semester at Quinnipiac's WQAO-98.1 FM, says most staffers are majoring in the field, but many others are not, himself included. He's a digital design major.

General staffers do hour-long, on-air time slots when they can play any music or talk about whatever they want; it's entirely free-form. Some do off-air work like cataloging music, doing promotion or design work, or seeking underwriting from local businesses. As a nonprofit, the station can't run advertisements.

The schedule includes two comedy shows, several sports programs, and even one where the campus Catholic chaplain and the campus rabbi have a gabfest. "They don't just talk about religion, they just talk," Rava says.



Matt Heller, 18, of Syosset, N.Y. laughs while broadcasting live at WQAQ radio with his co-host Ryan DeCosta, 22, of Madison. The pair host a weekly show "Sports, Stuff & Rants" that usually includes guests and sports-related topics on Tuesdays from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m.

right spinning discs and wondering if anyone's out there listening, because the station is automated after about 10 p.m., with a randomized playlist that tilts toward alt rock, rap and hip hop, and includes some metal, oldies and folk. Of course, some veteran radio jocks claim those were their happiest hours, as they sat in a booth contemplating the Zeitgeist.

The digital age has introduced another major change: would-be radio listeners have so many other options for consuming media that gathering an audience is a bigger challenge.

"It's really tough to get people to listen," Rava says. "I'd say the majority of the students don't. The business side of the student media groups did a survey, which found a lot of people tune in to their friends' shows, but otherwise most people do their own music." Most who tune in do so online in their dorms at www.wqaq.com.

There's also a practical side to working in campus radio, for those who want to go into the field, since they can use their best stuff as a demo reel.

The studios are in the Student Center near the Campus Life office.

"I think of it as homey," Rava says. "We have a room with couches and a lot of people come to hang out." Equipment is a mix of new and old. "We've had the same soundboards for at least 10 years," he notes. "We try to get new equipment in but we prefer to spend our budget putting on concerts for the students."

Despite the challenges, live radio still offers great appeal. "It's a lot of fun," Rava says. "If you mention it to people, a lot of them say, 'Oh, I wish I could do a radio show. I've always wanted to.'"

— MELINDA TUHUS

WVOF, 88.5-FM FAIRFIELD UNIVERSITY

Fifty years ago, as long as the wind was right, a jerry-rigged antenna would carry WVOF across most of Fairfield University's 200-acre campus. Today, an FM transmitter and web stream carry its student- and community-driven programming across Fairfield County and the world.

On the radio at 88.5, WVOF is run by roughly 100 students who make up the largest extracurricular club at the university, said staff adviser Dave Grazynski, who 13 years ago walked into the station studio as a

WQAQ doesn't carry the school's sporting events; a separate group on campus streams play-by-play online.

Lila Carney, assistant director of student media, says the station's been around since the 1970s, broadcasting at 10 watts for a radius of two to three miles. She says: "Its mission is educational, training students for work in radio and public speaking," which can be useful in any field (and which we all know is scarier than death). She adds that the airwaves are open to any student, staffer or faculty member.

In this digital age, no DJ has to sit through the long

"wide-eyed media major." Today, the 2004 graduate works full time as coordinator of Fairfield University's ID system and part time as WVOF general manager.

"Basically, I've never left college," said Grazyński. "I love the students and I love the station, because it provides such unique and thought-provoking programming. Two hours of Jamaican ska might be followed by two hours of Irish drinking songs or ballads, followed by a student calling Fairfield Stags basketball play by play. WVOF is also great because it gives students so many opportunities to be involved. Those who don't want to be on the air can focus on planning events, marketing or getting sponsorship."

Guided by the Catholic university's mission to engage and serve the larger Fairfield community, WVOF dedicates approximately one-third of its programming hours to area residents interested in hosting a show. Longtime local broadcasters include 82-year-old Wivan Sundman of Bridgeport, whose weekly Scandinavian House Party features accordion music, brass bands, marches, polkas and Swedish hambo dance songs.

Her husband, Lars Sundman, a well-known Swedish tenor, started the program in 1979. When he died in 1985, Wivan took over.

"If you came to my house, you'd see that I can find my bed, but the rest of my house is full of CDs and records," Wivan said. "One of the very nice things about doing the show is that I get to bring old music that people don't hear anymore back to those living in Sweden, Russia, France, Germany and other countries. Especially in Sweden, where I was born, radio stations only play songs sung in English. But WVOF's Internet abilities have let me bring traditional Scandinavian music to listeners all over the world. It's just wonderful."

Through a partnership with Connecticut Public Broadcasting, National Public Radio shows like "All Things Considered" and BBC World Service also air.

WFAN sports personality and Connecticut resident Bob Heussler, who for 25 years has called Fairfield Stags men's basketball games, teaches students interested in sportscasting how to call basketball, volleyball, soccer, lacrosse, baseball and softball games.

"One of the things staff at the station realized early on was that its strength would come from its involvement in the community," said Grazyński. WVOF was founded in 1962. "Some colleges are a little too insular. They forget they're part of a larger community, or they don't think that local listeners are interested in student programming, but we've found that not to be true. Because of our connection to the community and Connecticut Public Broadcasting, we've been able to bring in guests like Bridgeport Mayor Bill Finch and congressman Jim Himes to be on programs and meet with students. And with these kinds of broad connections, learning opportunities become endless."



| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---------------------------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| ← MORNING EDITION → | | | | | | |
| ← ALL THINGS CONSIDERED → | | | | | | |

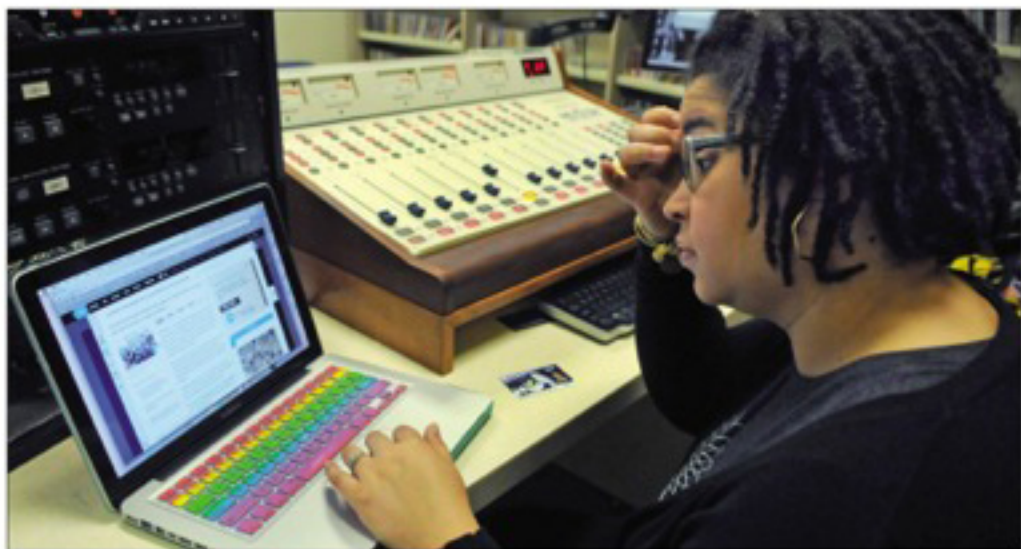
WVOF's programming grid outlines the weekly lineup in color, with black for National Public Radio programs, blue for shows by community members and red for student shows. Above, Rick Dobrydney, of Newtown, hosts his show "Jazz Attitude" that airs Thursdays from 6 to 8 p.m.

These same opportunities also mean that as students' schedules and interests change, so do WVOF's programs and voices.

One of the things Grazyński is sure will remain consistent, however, is WVOF's presence in the digital world, which now includes an iPhone app.

"As technology grows, so do ways for students to get involved in WVOF and earn their radio chops," Grazyński added. "We work hard to stay in step with how students everywhere listen to and experience radio, and to make sure that we embrace whatever is the latest technology, which today is all about making connections and reaching out to the world."

— CINDY WOLFE BOYNTON



Ave Rivera, 24, scans her laptop for current events for her twice-weekly show, *Alt Groove*, at WSIN at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven. Rivera DJs as Ave Renee does alternative music and news.

WSIN, 1590-AM

SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

WSIN is the latest incarnation of student radio at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven. It stands for Southern Independent Network, and program director Ave Rivera says, "It's the only 100 percent student run station in the New Haven area. That's exciting for us."

WSIN occupies a well-equipped suite in the Adanti Student Center, one of the newest and spiffiest buildings on campus. Its three studios are dedicated to the music library, production and on-air. The lobby is also outfitted with a couple of couches, so students at the mainly commuter school can "chill out" when they have time on their hands between classes, Rivera says. She adds that being on the air is a nice complement to her blog. A studio art major, she co-hosts a show called *Art Reach*.

Students are on-air about 12 hours a day, Monday through Friday. Shows include music and relationships, sports, hot topics in pop culture, and three news-related shows. Programmers can get copies of their shows to make podcasts. They call the sports games but don't run them live. Nights and weekends, listeners will hear *Auto DJ*, which offers eclectic music programming.

Rivera says it's not hard to get a show, most of which run for one or two hours a week.

"All you have to do is complete training and be in good standing in the club, which means coming to

meetings and doing volunteer work of some kind." She actually enforces the rules, and takes shows away or declines to award them to students who don't hold up their end of the bargain. "I'm telling a couple of people this week that they're not going to get shows because they didn't do that."

Jerry Dunklee is a journalism professor at Southern and the station's adviser – which means he takes care of the paperwork to make sure the station stays legal; decisions are made by an eight-person all-student board. He says it's been on the air in one form or another since the 1950s. It's a low-power station, at 1590 AM, so it covers just the campus, but the station has extended its reach since it went online in 2001 at www.wsinaradio.org. It arrived at its current call letters after learning that two previous sets were already in use in the country.

The station has been a training ground for professionals in the field. "I have lost count of the number of former students who still work in broadcasting," Dunklee says, mentioning Anthony Fantano of "The Needle Drop" on NPR, another who produces a talk show on ESPN Radio, and a third who works at WELI with Vinnie Penn, among others. Samantha Stevens, a local DJ for many years, is a former general manager of the student station.

Whether any of the current crop of staff members will go on to fame is an open question. First, they'd like to get more famous on campus. "We want to make sure the students know the radio station exists," Rivera says, "which is still an issue."

— MELINDA TUHUS



WHRT, webstreamed SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY

Student-run WHRT is quite literally at the heart of Fairfield's Sacred Heart University.

Students heading to classes, the cafeteria, student union or almost anywhere in the campus' main academic building have to walk by the station's broadcasting booth, which sits where three hallways

intersect.

"That can sometimes pose a challenge to students standing or walking outside the glass," said WHRT President and General Manager Joseph Berry, a senior communications and political science major. "A lot of the DJs like to shout out to people, asking questions or challenging them to do stunts. But most students who don't like that kind of thing know the hours when they might want to get to class by a different route."

One of Princeton Review's top 25 "most popular



college radio stations" each of the past five years, WHRT can only be heard via web stream, within the hallways of SHU's main building and across the street at Mondo Subs in the Christian Witness Commons residency hall. It will return to its longtime location at 91.5 FM in 2015, when the 125,000-square-foot building being constructed to house Sacred Heart's John F. Welch College of Business and Department of Communication & Media Studies is completed, and the WHRT antenna goes back up.

Working in a cramped, one-room studio, from left, Nathan Tallo, 21, of Sandown, N.H. and Joe Berry, 21, of Warren, broadcast their show "Happy Hour" on Thursdays from 5 to 7 p.m. on the campus of Sacred Heart University in Bridgeport. The station's antenna is down during construction of a new building.

Because WHRT was once a part of the campus-based, National Public Radio affiliate WSHU, many in the community wrongly confuse the two, Berry said. But one of his goals is to change that.

"Going off on our own gave WHRT the freedom to become more personal and focus on what students want to hear and air," Berry said. "An added benefit is that our variety of programs seem to appeal to people everywhere. One of our regular listeners is a guy from Scotland who calls himself Ivan from the North. He calls us, emails. We also hear from listeners who go to colleges all over."

Like Berry, who plays "all kinds of different music and sometimes takes on political issues" from 5-7 p.m. on Thursdays, most of WHRT's on-air personalities are undergraduates. All play a variety of music during their two-hour time slots, which mean at any given time, a listener could hear anything from Beethoven to the Beastie Boys to Bahamian junkanoo.

Sports, tech and literature talk also tend to be popular, and one Wednesday a month — as long as all the technology is working right, Berry said — WHRT airs concerts by local singer-songwriters. A recent Wednesday featured The Awkward Handshakes improv group and a group called Eyes to See playing on the Sacred Heart campus.

Part of the reason for WHRT's broad content range, Berry said, is that show hosts come from throughout the university. Mixed in with those majoring in media are those majoring in biology, nursing, graphic design, criminal justice and physical therapy. "Our DJs are from all over the place, campus-wise and interest-wise," Berry added.

Once WHRT is established in the new building, former New York Mets and Boston Red Sox manager Bobby Valentine will likely return to host episodes of his NBC Sports Radio program from the WHRT booth, Berry said.

"You never know exactly what you're going to get from listening to HRT, which is one of the things that makes it exciting," he added. "The format works like this: pick a two-hour time slot and design a show. There are rules, of course, but huge variety, and our goal is to be interesting; to have fun. We're not a radio station attempting to break ground in the industry or to get everyone in the country to listen. All the DJs care a lot about putting out the best show possible, but it's pretty much free reign."

— CINDY WOLFE BOYNTON