

1766

Alumni Magazine



The magazine published
by and for the
Rutgers Alumni Association
of New Brunswick
SUMMER 2013

Sean Kenney's Building Blocks of Success



ALSO INSIDE:

- Cutting Edge Robotic Surgery
- Veteran Students Bridge the Gap
- RAA Happenings...and more!



Rutgers Alumni Association
181 Years of Service to Rutgers Alumni

Founded in 1831, the Rutgers Alumni Association (RAA) is a 501(c)3 service organization maintained by and for the graduates of Rutgers College, the School of Engineering, the former College of Agriculture, the former School of Education, the Mason Gross School of the Arts, School of Management and Labor Relations, the Graduate School – New Brunswick, and other interested alumni from Rutgers New Brunswick/Piscataway campus. Chartered in 2008 as the largest affinity organization of the new university-wide alumni association (RUAA), the RAA's purpose is to create a vital, beneficial, and continuing relationship between Rutgers and its alumni around the globe. It partners with the university on events such as Reunion Weekend. The RAA also independently publishes *1766* to inform members about issues that concern them, provides funding to support deserving student organizations, awards an annual scholarship to a deserving legacy student, develops career seminars for graduates, and offers opportunities for volunteer service in all aspects of university life — from participation in governance committees to mentoring undergraduates. As the fourth-oldest organized alumni association in America, the 180-year-old Rutgers Alumni Association is proudly supported by a volunteer army fueled by nearly 200,000 alumni constituents. We welcome your participation.

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1766

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COVER STORY

Sean Kenney Builds a Successful Career with LEGOs..... 9

Feature Articles

Veteran and civilian students bridge the gap..... 4

Using Robotics to Help Win the War on Cancer..... 6

Neil Solondz's Journey to the Big Leagues..... 12

"Mangia Hoboken" Food Tour..... 14

Departments

President's Message..... 3

RAA Happenings..... 14

Calendar of Events..... 16

We are no longer located in Winants Hall. Please note our new contact information:

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Carpenter RC '57

Wow, what a year. I had more fun than a barrel of monkeys.

Some say being President is a tough job and I have heard words like “thank goodness” when the year is over. But for me, the year flew by and the challenges faced were made so much easier by having a fantastic board and great committee chairs to work with.

We welcome **Bill Huneke RC'76, NLAW'79**, who has taken over as managing editor of 1766. Cara will assist him staying on as our graphic designer. I am sure the two of them will produce another great magazine and after you finish reading it, I'm sure you'll agree.

The undergraduate committee headed by **Houshang Parsa RC'80** had another outstanding speed networking and reverse career fair with several hundred alumni and undergraduates participating. Our tri-chairs, **Sandra Golis RC'10, GSE'12, Danielle Bechta RC'11** and **Alyssa Gentile RC'09, GSE'10** took the Young Alumni Committee from dead in the water to a committee that attracts new young alumni at every meeting. The enthusiasm generated by our Young Alumni and Undergraduate committees rubbed off on us and we were motivated to work harder to achieve our goals.

John Dolan RC'70 and **Gene Fricks ENG'70** updated our bylaws to reflect changes that have occurred over the last several years. **Ellen Yu RC'99** and **Michele Linder RC'85** handled over 18 requests for funding from student organizations and doled out \$8000. **Garry Katz ENG'68/RC'68** initiated a strategic plan to determine where we want to be as an organization down the road. **Bob Eichert RC'78** and **Debbie Fuchs RC'80** put together another fantastic Loyal Sons & Loyal Daughters event, the highlight of our social events for the year. As usual, **Charles Collard RC'67** and **Tony Zecca RC'74, GSNB'76** have put together a venue from baseball games to tours of Hoboken.

One of the highlights this year was a meet and greet of old and new alumni with Rutgers' football coach, Kyle Flood, as our guest speaker. We alumni present were treated to a great talk and we added many new members to our committees.

We strengthened our organization this year by developing a closer relationship with Alumni Relations. They are working diligently to promote our Young Alumni and undergraduate events and assist us wherever possible.

Thanks to all who made this a memorable year, a year that I will never forget. ✨



TOM CARPENTER

Connect with us!



Follow the RAA on the Web, Facebook, and Twitter, and receive daily updates about alumni and events taking place on and off campus. Post your own news, links, photos and video, and find other alums or former classmates!



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Veteran and civilian students bridge the gap

by Christopher Reardon

Will Madigan spent 2007 serving with the 1st Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment of the U.S. Army in Zabul Province, Afghanistan. The former sergeant's greatest challenge was mentally preparing for death. Today Madigan is a 25-year-old junior at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, studying human resource management, and his greatest challenge is re-integrating into society and student life.

"Loneliness, depression, finding new friends," he said are some of the difficulties veterans face upon leaving military service and enrolling in college. "It's easy to get lost here."

Madigan is finding his way and helping other veteran students at Rutgers through RU SERVS, the school's veteran student organization, of which he is president. The organization's mission is to put in place policies and procedures to make the transition to university life as smooth as possible for veterans and to provide social and academic support, advocacy and outreach.

During the year Madigan spent in Afghanistan Ruthi Pratt was starting high school in West Orange. During her high school career she developed a deep sense of patriotism and respect for the men and women of the U.S. military.

"I started to develop a love for my county and an immense amount of respect for those who have served," she said.

Soon after enrolling at Rutgers the 19-year-old with a double major in statistics and finance discovered RU 4 TROOPS, the student organization committed to supporting active soldiers serving overseas, veterans on campus and members of military families. RU 4 Troops provides tutoring for veteran students, sends care packages to members of the U.S. military serving overseas and raises funds for the Wounded Warrior Project. Pratt serves as president.

"Loneliness, depression, finding new friends... It's easy to get lost here."

WILL MADIGAN,
25-YEAR-OLD VETERAN STUDENT ON LEAVING
THE MILITARY AND ENTERING COLLEGE

Today Madigan and Pratt are working together and aligning their respective organizations to further the missions of each while also raising awareness among the general student population about veteran students, both their needs and their humanity.

It is not always an easy task.

"A lot of people don't understand what it's like to be a veteran," Pratt said. "When people my age think about veterans we think about older men. We don't realize there are veterans who are our age or just a little older."

Jerry Masin RC '80, president of Compass Scale, a management and investment consultancy business, and co-chair of the Rutgers Alumni Association (RAA) Undergraduate Committee, saw that gap between veteran students and civilian students and alumni as a barrier for the veterans, in both the present and the future. In response Masin is spearheading an RAA effort labeled Bridging the Gap, a campaign to connect the veteran and civilian populations at the university to enable a smoother transition for veterans from military service to civilian student life and to lay groundwork for career development following graduation.

Masin sees the RU SERVS-RU 4 Troops collaboration as an example of the Bridging the Gap concept put into action.

"A lot of people don't understand what it's like to be a veteran... When people my age think about veterans we think about older men. We don't realize there are veterans who are our age or just a little older."

RUTHI PRATT,
RUTGERS UNDERGRADUATE
AND PRESIDENT OF THE
STUDENT ORGANIZATION
"RU 4 TROOPS"

Sustainable Employment

“There has to be a ‘so that’ part of the equation,” Masin said. “You go to college so that you can get a job and find sustainable employment but you’re not going to find a job if you can’t get through school. Here we have a group of young men and women fostering and advancing the ‘so that’ component for veterans. This collaboration helps these veterans acclimate to the academic

Rutgers is ahead of the curve in assisting veteran students with their transition to the college environment, raising faculty and staff sensitivity to the unique issues faced by veteran students, and streamlining administrative procedures for active-duty students returning from deployment.

environment so that they are able to get a degree so that they are able to find a job and achieve sustainable employment.”

Masin believes the relationship between RU SERVS and RU 4 Troops is a microcosm of support that should be replicated throughout society as a whole.

“Less than 1 percent of the men and women in our nation volunteer for the armed services,” he said. “That means the 99-plus percent that is the rest of us needs to do something for that 1 percent. If we are going to ask them to sacrifice to protect us we need to show our appreciation. This is an example of the 99 percent supporting the 1 percent.”

That needs to include the business community, Masin added.

“Veterans consider the tutoring and other support they are receiving as fundamental to their ability to succeed at Rutgers,” he said. “A veteran has a natural disposition to seek training and if they see a barrier to their training, they’re going to naturally gravitate to overcoming that barrier.

“That translates into employment after graduation. Veterans are trained to learn, master skills and achieve goals. What employer would not want that type of person working for them?”

Challenges and Solutions

There are nearly 1 million veterans enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities, the majority under the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill. Reports of how they are faring are mixed.

A recent analysis by the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions found that 88 percent of veterans attending college drop out during their first year and only 3 percent graduate. However, the Student Veterans Association

reports that 68 percent of veterans responding to a survey reported they received the degree or certificate for which they were receiving Veterans Affairs educational benefits.

“From Soldier to Student II: Assessing Campus Programs for Veterans and Service Members,” a study produced in partnership by several national education and veterans affairs organizations, found that the percentage of institutions with a

dedicated office serving veteran and military students increased to 71 percent in 2012 from 49 percent in 2009. However, the study also found areas that were lacking, including assisting military and veteran students with their transition to the college environment; raising faculty and staff sensitivity to the unique issues faced by military and veteran students and their families; and streamlining campus administrative procedures for active-duty military students returning from deployment.

Rutgers University is ahead of the curve in all these areas. The university is ranked the third most veteran-friendly college in the United States by *Military Times Edge*.

Rutgers has more than 1,200 veteran students enrolled using their GI Bill benefits and another approximately 800 students who are veterans not using those benefits, active duty or National Guard military personnel, students enrolled in the ROTC or children and spouses of veterans, according to Steve Abel, director, Office of Veteran & Military Programs & Services.

These students face unique challenges, according to Abel, including being older than most students; special requirements, such as a veteran with a physical disability needing someone to take notes for them; and fear of getting treatment for an emotional

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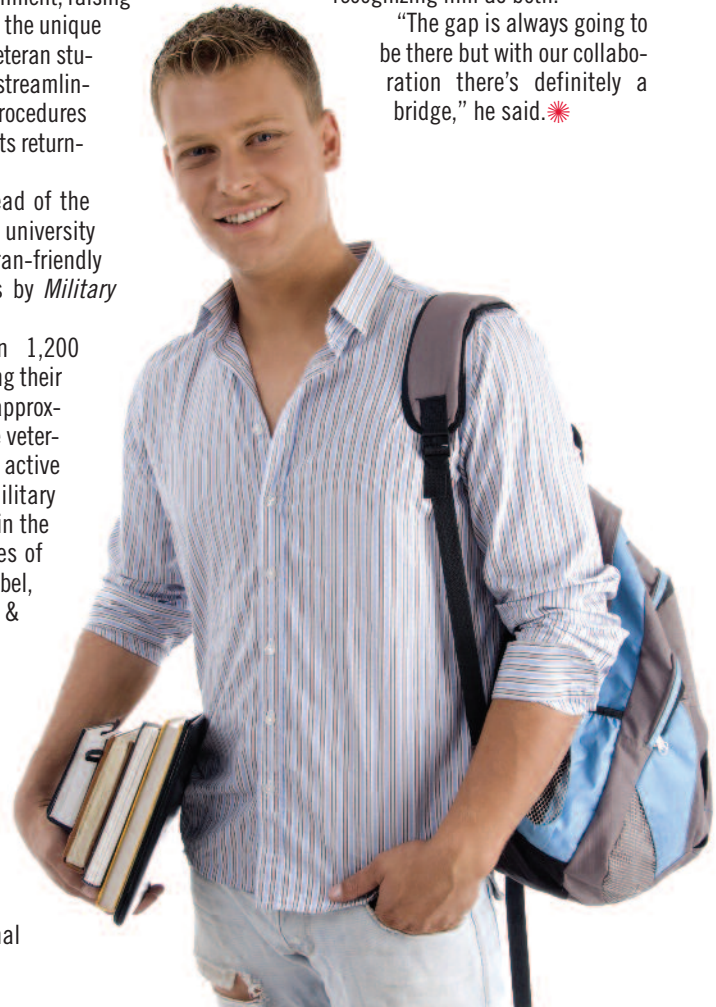
disorder developed while in the service. In addition, veterans also have unique academic needs related to the pressure to complete school in 36 to 48 consecutive months before their GI Bill benefits run out, he added.

Abel believes the work being done by RU SERVS and RU 4 Troops helps with some of these challenges.

“Veterans should not feel they simply need to melt into the student population but should be proud of being veterans and students,” he said. “What these two groups do is foster that idea. When we first opened our office on campus there were more veterans who were not self-identifying. Part of what we do and what these two groups do is make it more likely for veterans to say, ‘Yes, I’m a veteran and I’m proud of it.’”

Madigan is proud to be a veteran and a student and sees progress in others recognizing him as both.

“The gap is always going to be there but with our collaboration there’s definitely a bridge,” he said. ✨



Using Robotics to Help Win the War on Cancer

By Chris Keane ENG '94

Removing tumors using a state-of-the-art robot?

Teaching new physicians how to perform surgery with the first-ever "robot surgery app" ?

Innovating and inspiring to improve the future of medicine?

For **Dr. Martin Martino RC '93**, this is just another day at the office. The 41 year-old cancer surgeon and Medical Director of the Minimally Invasive Robotic Surgery Program at Lehigh Valley Health Network, is just as comfortable discussing his passion for improving patient care over lunch in the hospital cafeteria, as he is controlling the tiny instruments of the da Vinci Surgical Robot during a cancer surgery a few hours later. Some people were just born to save lives.

PHOTO BY JAIME MARTINO



When robotics became available more than a decade ago, the medical community greeted the technology with a fair amount of skepticism and trepidation. Dr. Martino credits Rutgers for his willingness to break new medical ground in his career. “My professors at Rutgers, and other mentors along the way, taught me to always keep an open mind, stay positive and believe in yourself.”

That outlook is what helped Dr. Martino as he immersed himself into the world of medical-focused robotics and discovered the many benefits this innovative technology had to offer for his patients. Perhaps the most important characteristic of robotic-assisted surgery is its minimally invasive nature. With this technology, surgeons are able to offer many more patients this minimally invasive approach rather than a larger incision. In traditional, open surgery, the surgeon makes a large, long incision which is widened to allow access to the patient’s anatomy and leads to patients staying in the hospital longer than when surgery is performed through smaller incisions. In Minimally Invasive Surgery (MIS), the surgeon operates through a few small, key-hole incisions. This means less blood loss, fewer transfusions and complications, as well as quicker recovery times.

Using the Intuitive’s da Vinci Surgical System, currently the only robot approved for medical use in the United States, the surgeon controls four ro-



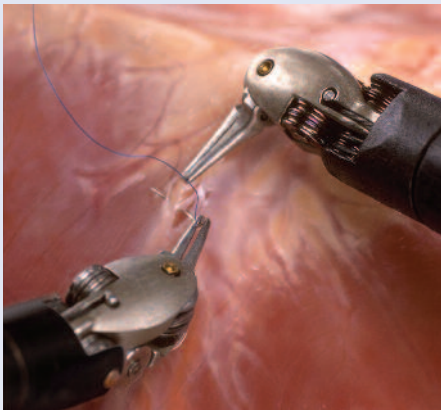
botic arms attached to tiny instruments from behind a console, while viewing a real-time stream of 3-D high-definition video of the surgical area. The 3-D video improves depth perception and sharpens situational awareness through finer image detail. The robot’s ability to translate relatively large hand movements into micro-movements of surgical instruments enables greater precision.

While the majority of cancer surgery in the United States is performed through large incisions, the tide is starting to change. This is in no small part to the great efforts of Dr. Martino. He is a board-certified gynecologic oncologist who has completed hundreds of successful surgeries using the robotic method, while championing minimally invasive technology such as robotics for use in men and women who may develop tumors or complex benign conditions that need to be removed with-

out large incisions. He and his team at LVHN have been pioneering techniques to perform these complex procedures with minimal scarring while improving quality outcomes for patients. In addition, he has been educating patients and colleagues about the benefits of Minimally Invasive Surgery, and is helping to develop national curriculum to make it a formal part of a surgeon’s medical training.

His passion for saving lives and education have their roots at home. Dr. Martino’s mother was diagnosed with metastatic cancer from the uterus to her lungs when he was just 4 years old. She was treated with multiple rounds of chemotherapy, and thankfully her cancer went into remission. As a child, he learned from his twin sister, Joanne. “She taught me early on how to teach”, Martino says, “She went on to get her Masters degree at Rutgers in Education, and is an amazing teacher.” These early child experiences helped form the basis for his practice today. “My two most important goals are patient safety and improving quality (surgery) outcomes”, he

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



Most incisions are less than the size of a dime!

In Minimally Invasive Surgery the surgeon operates through a few small, key-hole incisions. This means less blood loss, fewer transfusions and complications, as well as quicker recovery times.

says. His open mind combined with a great work-ethic, and genuine passion for patients has led to amazing results. More than half of his patients who receive this Minimally Invasive Surgery are well enough to go home in less than twenty-four hours, many on the same day that they had their surgery. At LVHN, Dr. Martino is using robotics in new and exciting ways. He performed a robotic radical trachelectomy on a cervical cancer patient. He's even used robotics for fertility-saving surgery, which offers new hope to young women who require gynecologic surgery, but are still dreaming of starting a family someday.

“My professors at Rutgers, and other mentors along the way, taught me to always keep an open mind, stay positive and believe in yourself.”

Having briefly experienced a robotic surgery simulator during a recent visit to Allentown, PA, it was clear to me that if this generation of physicians doesn't fully embrace robotic surgery, the next generation surely will. It's a natural extension of the technology tools that our children are growing up with today. Dr. Martino's newest passion is called “the Simulation Olympics”, which allows children to compete for prizes as they perform virtual surgery using a simulator. While offering an exciting and educational extra-curricular activity, it's also paving the way to the future. “The kids all leave these events wanting to be doctors.” My goal is for children to learn what we have available today, so they can make something better for us to use tomorrow.”

Dr. Martino was also inspired by the diligence of his father (UC'69, RBS'72), a United States Marine who completed his MBA at night while working full-time as a chemist. So, when it came time to choose a career path, Dr. Martino double-majored

in Biology and Political Science-History. After gaining an understanding of how the human body works, he had the passion to learn more. In between classes at Rutgers, he volunteered at Robert Wood Johnson and worked at St. Peters University Hospital as a phlebotomist. He became Rutgers College Class of 1993 President and gave the commencement speech at graduation— where he asked the class “To have the courage to dream— and the determination to make that dream a reality.”

After receiving his bachelor's degree from Rutgers College in 1993 he completed medical school at Hahnemann Medical College in Philadelphia. He completed his residency at UMDNJ: RWJ School of Medicine, and during that time, he completed a Galloway Fellowship in Gynecologic Oncology at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. In 2002, he went to Tampa, FL where he completed his gynecologic oncology fellowship at the University of South Florida and the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center.

In his current post as Medical Director of Robotic Surgery at LVHN, Dr. Martino is a strong advocate for patient care, education and research. He and his work are so well known, on a recent visit he could barely walk down the halls or grab a quick bite in the cafeteria without being approached by colleagues looking to discuss anything from his latest robotic surgery presentation, future collaborations, or simply tell him about a positive encounter with one of his past professors or students. Right now, his chief resident is Rutgers alumna **Lisa Dapuzzo RC '05**. She is a fourth-year OBGYN Resident who will graduate from residency at LVHN and begin working at the Center for Women's Medicine, which is a free clinic run by the health network to help care for uninsured and underinsured women in the Lehigh Valley area.



JAIME MARTINO

While utilizing state-of-the-art technology is an important aspect of Dr. Martino's work, at the end of the day, it's about providing quality cancer treatment for his patients. “These are our wives, our sisters, and our mothers and fathers— we have to do our best to treat them like family” he says. My ultimate objective is to provide our patients with the absolute best care that we can, with a patient and family-centered focus. We have to find new treatments, new techniques and new medicines to help our cancer patients so that they can live their life to the fullest, it's what drives me every day.”

“We have to find new treatments, new techniques and new medicines to help our cancer patients so that they can live their life to the fullest— it's what drives me every day.”

Today, Dr. Martino's time is spent performing life-saving surgeries, leading cutting-edge research and innovation in the field of robotics, educating through community outreach and modernizing curriculums, all while planning Rutgers upcoming Class of 1993's 20-year reunion; any one of these tasks could be overwhelming on its own. “The work I do is only possible with the love and support of my amazing wife Jaime, who is a nurse and a RC'99 alumna, my three children and my family.” In the years to come, technological advances will likely make medical robotic systems more precise, smaller, user-friendly and cost-effective. As these and other technological advances continue to modernize surgery, you'll find Dr. Martino out in front leading the way to a healthier tomorrow while saving lives. ✨

For more information, contact Dr. Martino at Martin_A.Martino@lvhn.org visit www.smaller scar.com or on Facebook at **LVHN Robotic Surgery**





For Sean Kenney, Life's Yellow Brick Road Is Paved with Endless LEGO Blocks

By Randy Young RC '68

Some guys never grow up. **Sean Kenney BS '98** is more than just an example. He's the poster child.

Kenney began playing with LEGO blocks at age two, and was so taken with the tiny plastic pieces they were all he craved for his birthdays. After graduating from Rutgers and being rewarded with a fat salary and bright future as a software designer in New York, he knew he still wasn't happy. What he really wanted to do, you guessed it, was play with LEGOs.

Here's where the story turns to pure fantasy. Kenney up and quit his six-figure job and began pursuing a full-time career as a LEGO builder. Today, at the age of 36, he sits atop one of the coolest jobs in America: transforming LEGO bricks into contemporary sculpture, gifts and commercial logos and getting paid handsomely for his efforts. Among his clients are

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



celebrities, museums, galleries, tourist attractions and companies like Google, Mazda, Nintendo, JP Morgan Chase and Samsung. He commands the title “LEGO Certified Professional” and is one of just 11 in the world.

How does one become a self-described “professional kid?” Kenney, who now works out of a bright, airy studio in Queens surrounded by two million LEGO pieces, has a ready answer. “I used to wear a suit to work every day, but the whole time my ‘inner child’ was itching to get out and play,” he recalls. “I’d sit in my office in a 40-story skyscraper in New York daydreaming about bright plastic blocks and what I was going to build when I got home. One day I decided to follow my dreams. I got up from my desk, took my tie off and walked out – just like that, in the middle of the day. And I’ve never looked back.”

“One day I decided to follow my dreams. I got up from my desk, took my tie off and walked out—just like that, in the middle of the day. And I’ve never looked back.”



Taking His Creativity to College

His roommates at Rutgers drew an early bead on his predilections when he’d show up at the beginning of the school year with bins of LEGO bricks, along with essentials like furniture, pillows and eating utensils. But Kenney spread his collegiate wings in many other directions. A computer science major, he took a number of fine arts courses and served as chair of the Undergraduate Student Association of Computer Science. He also exercised his love of drawing and cartoons, honed from his childhood days, by founding the Rutgers Organization of Cartoonists (today known as the Cartoonists Association of Rutgers).

Then there were the three years he worked part-time for the school’s Telecommunications Division. “It was the height of the ‘dot-com’ boom,” he remembers, “and it gave me world experience that was absolutely great for the first leg of my adult career.”

But even the internet couldn’t contain his creativity, and Kenney was soon following his muse down a yellow brick road paved with LEGOs. He opened a small shop and began raiding toy stores and frantically sending out for mail-order kits to get the bulk amounts of blocks he needed. Before long, he was moving into a 800-square-foot studio in Queens (which he shares with his staff), and getting wood pallets stacked with LEGO cartons delivered to his front door thanks to the bulk-buying privileges that came with being named the very first LEGO Certified Professional in 2005. These pieces are sorted by color and shape and stored in drawers and plastic bins that ring his work shop.



Kenney consumes the cubes with gleeful abandon as he sculpts works of art for clients and exhibits. Consider his largest project to date: a life-size, 400-pound polar bear he built for the Philadelphia Zoo using 95,000 LEGO blocks. This masterpiece took 1,100 hours of work (and 60 gallons of coffee, he adds) by Kenney and five staffers.

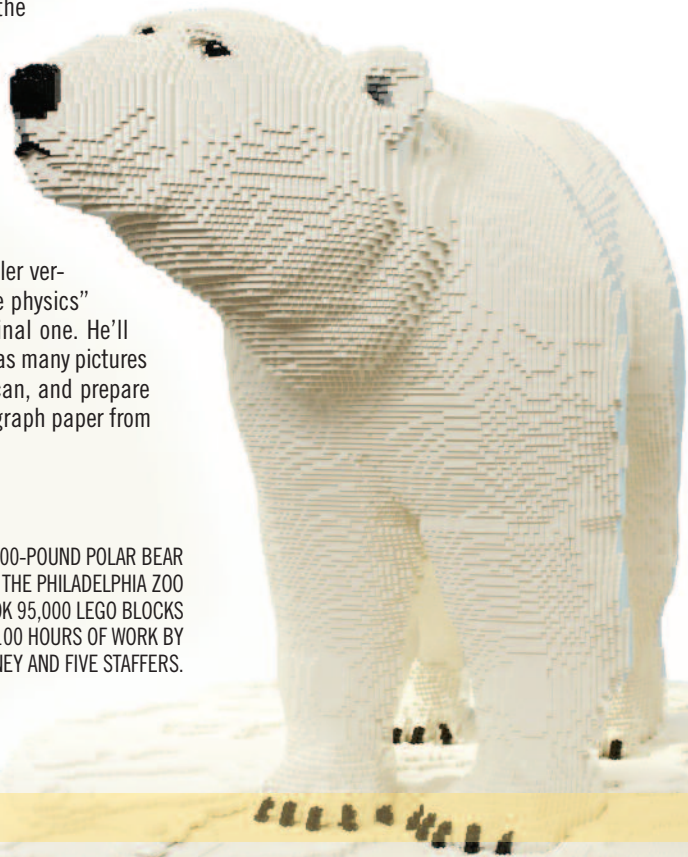
“Unlike traditional sculpture, you can’t just carve out a shape or add to a surface. You’re creating subtle, curved shapes from hard little plastic rectangles.”

No less ambitious is his exhibit, *Nature Connects*, which debuted at Iowa State University’s Reiman Gardens and will travel around the country through 2016. Among the eye-popping 27 sculptures on display are a five-foot wide tiger swallowtail (37,481 LEGO pieces), a seven-foot long bison (45,143 pieces), and a ruby-throated hummingbird that hovers almost eight feet in the air (31,565 pieces) as it feasts on giant flowers.

The Real Reward

Backed by a growing oeuvre, Kenney now has his craft down to a science. For larger commissions — like his two-and-a-half foot tall replica of the Chrysler Building, New York’s Art Deco skyscraper, or his four-foot tall rendering of the Chicago Tribune Tower with its intricate detail — he’ll construct a smaller version to “figure out the physics” before tackling the final one. He’ll also get his hands on as many pictures of the subject as he can, and prepare his own drawings on graph paper from multiple angles.

THIS 400-POUND POLAR BEAR BUILT FOR THE PHILADELPHIA ZOO TOOK 95,000 LEGO BLOCKS AND 1,100 HOURS OF WORK BY KENNEY AND FIVE STAFFERS.

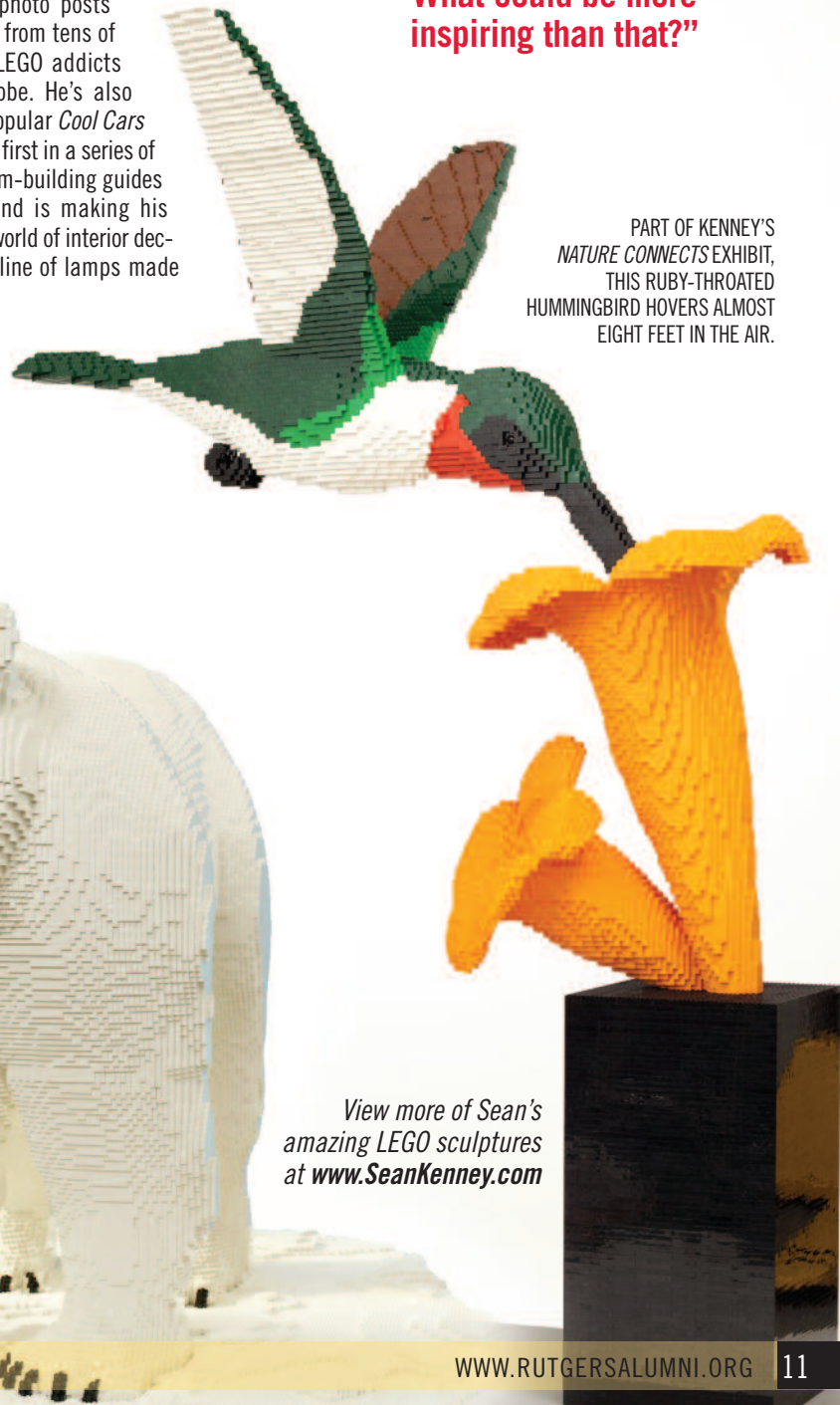


All of which leads to the fun part of his job: assembling the pieces into something memorable. “Constructing with LEGO bricks is an obvious challenge,” he notes. “Unlike traditional sculpture, you can’t just carve out a shape or add to a surface. You’re creating subtle, curved shapes from hard little plastic rectangles. That’s very tricky at first, but once you get the hang of it it’s very rewarding to build something organic.”

Speaking of rewarding, Kenney was the founder and continues to run MOCPages.com, the world’s largest LEGO fan community. In some ways a predecessor to Facebook and Tumblr, the ten-year-old site is an online showcase for photo posts and comments from tens of thousands of LEGO addicts around the globe. He’s also author of the popular *Cool Cars and Trucks*, the first in a series of picturebook-cum-building guides for children, and is making his debut into the world of interior decorating with a line of lamps made of (who would ever guess) L E G O blocks.

In short, the one-time computer science major has cut his own groove in life and is now reaping some very satisfying rewards. “Seeing people enjoy my work inspires me to build even more cool things,” he says. Like the giant interactive LEGO city he did for FAO Schwarz in Manhattan, to which kids flock year-round. “I get to have fun all day and make people smile. What could be more inspiring than that?” ✨

“I get to have fun all day and make people smile. What could be more inspiring than that?”



PART OF KENNEY’S *NATURE CONNECTS* EXHIBIT, THIS RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD HOVERS ALMOST EIGHT FEET IN THE AIR.

View more of Sean’s amazing LEGO sculptures at www.SeanKenney.com



From the *Targum* to Tampa — Neil Solondz's journey to the big leagues

by Bill Huneke RC'76, NLAW'79

When major league baseball players make the major leagues, it's known as getting to "the show." When **Neil Solondz RC '92** began broadcasting for the Tampa Bay Rays, he not only made the show...he does the show.

In Neil's case, the show is the pre-game and post-game show for the Rays, an American League rival of the New York Yankees and Boston Red Sox, among others. From the *Targum* to Tampa was a journey that took him through several small markets and minor league teams, the same path that the players take. He is now in his 16th year of professional baseball, with the first 14 spent learning a wide range of things that make for a better broadcaster.

"I worked with the Somerset Patriots when Sparky Lyle was managing, the Quad City River Bandits (a Minnesota Twins A-League team in Iowa), 3 years with the Lakewood Blue Claws (a Phillies low-A team)," recalled Solondz after a spring training workout with the Rays in Port

From the *Targum* to Tampa was a journey that took him through several small markets and minor league teams—the same path that the players take.

Charlotte, Florida. "Especially with an independent team like the Patriots, you get experience dealing with upcoming players as well as older ballplayers still trying to stay in the game. You learn how to relate to both prospects and veterans, and you learn how to better prepare to communicate in the process. Whether they were on their way up or down, I treated everyone with respect. Each has their own unique personality and my job was to find the best way to communicate."

Solondz came to Rutgers after graduating from Columbia High School in Maplewood. He began with WRSU on the radio side, but also worked as an Associate Sports Editor with the *Targum*, then News Editor and a sports columnist. Covering soccer, lacrosse, football, basketball and baseball, he recalls that Rutgers gave him early chances to work his trade. "As a freshman, I got to do games, which was a great opportunity. I think most importantly, I learned to write. Even as a broadcaster, I think you need to know how to write well first. As you develop a writing style, that helps you develop a speaking style. You find that way to put your own personal touch on what you say."

Rutgers helped give Neil a good education as well as some open doors. "I was an English major and tried to get a broad liberal arts education," said Solondz. "From WRSU, I got an opportunity to do some work for WCTC. When the Patriots moved in to Bridgewater, WCTC gave me the opportunity to do some play-by-play, which is what

I love most. Bruce Johnson, who many will recall as the voice of Rutgers in those days, was my boss and my mentor and we're still in touch."

"Bruce helped teach me how to prepare for a game the right way. It shouldn't matter if you're

teams added to the depth of his experience. "I did mostly radio, but some TV too. For the AAA team, some of the home games were simulcast and I got to do more TV play-by-play. The MLB Network televised some minor league games and I got to

The Tampa-St. Petersburg area is the latest big place that Neil is learning to make small to him. "I am just thrilled to be at the major league level. When most positions open up at the major league level, there are several hundred applicants. You submit demo CDs. When I was with the Durham Bulls (the Rays AAA-League affiliate, from 2004-2011) I created a relationship with people at the Rays and I think that helped."

Solondz hosts the shows before and after games on the Rays Radio Network, as well as *This Week in Rays Baseball*, an hour-long network show. While Andy Freed and Dave Wills do most of the play-by-play, Neil gets a shot at times. "I did a few innings of a Kansas City Royals game, and my first full game was an Angels game at home," he recalled with a smile. Does he have a signature home run call yet? "No, I have never had one," he said. "To me, each homer is different, from a lined shot that barely clears the wall to a majestic drive. You just have to be true to yourself."

He now lives in Palm Harbor, FL with his wife Sari and their daughters, Emily, 6, and Abby, 5. He appreciates their support for a job which involves watching over 190 live baseball games each year and spending spring training days in the Florida sunshine, not a bad gig. "Behind every good broadcaster is a supportive wife," he said. "They are at home doing the heavy lifting. The broadcasters are the kids at the candy store." ❀

**"It shouldn't matter if you're in a big market...
or a small market with one listener,
you should prepare the same way and be precise.
You have to give someone a reason to listen,
be it calling the action or telling a story."**

in a big market with 100,000 listeners or a really small market with one listener, you should prepare the same way and be precise. You have to give someone a reason to listen, be it calling the action or telling a story."

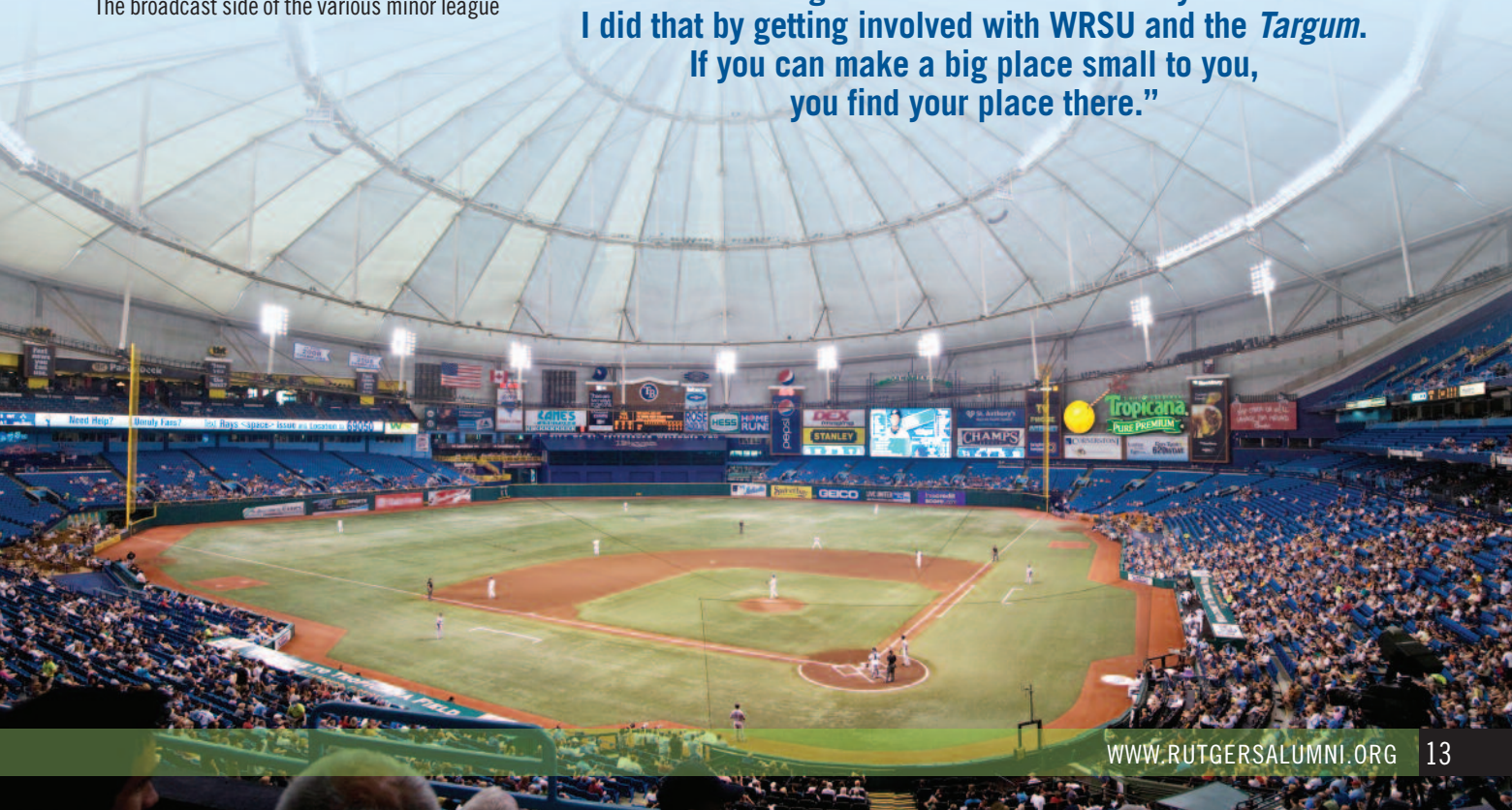
Neil's journey to the big leagues took him through several stops in New Jersey, Delaware, Iowa, North Carolina, and finally to Florida. "Working with the minor league teams provided practical experience which was critical," recalled Solondz. "At Lakewood, for example, I did play-by-play, but I was also the Director of Media and Public Relations, worked on sponsorship sales, and a bunch of other things. I worked under and still keep in touch with Geoff Brown." Brown, who was literally the first employee and General Manager, recently left the Blue Claws after being with them from day one to become Rutgers' Senior Associate Athletic Director/Chief Marketing Officer. "I'm really happy for Geoff. It's a great challenge for him, especially with Rutgers going to the Big Ten."

The broadcast side of the various minor league

call them. USA Baseball had a Prospect Classic for top high school kids, I was involved with that, and even did some football for ESPN3."

Although it involved moving his family several times, the trip through the minors provided one life lesson that was of great importance. "You go to a new place and you have to learn to deal in a new market," said Solondz. "But you learn that you don't have to start over. You have to learn how to make that market small to you. That's how you learn how to feel at home and fit in. It's like going to a large state university like Rutgers and learning how to make it small for yourself. I did that by getting involved with WRSU and the *Targum*. If you can make a big place small to you, you find your place there."

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RAA Happenings

The “Mangia Hoboken” Food & Culture Tour

By Mike Brill RC '77

Thirty seven RAA members, friends and family arrived at the entrance to the Hoboken PATH train station at around 1:30pm on Saturday, April 20th to begin a fun-filled, delicious and educational 3-hour walking tour of one of New Jersey's most interesting and historic towns... Hoboken. Sponsored by the RAA's Member Services Committee, this was the first time our organization experienced this fabulous tour.

The day turned out to be perfect, sunny and in the mid-60's. Our tour guides from Mangia Hoboken, Avi and Pat, split our group into 2 smaller manageable tours and each group began in slightly different directions.

We started off visiting one of the oldest streets

in Hoboken, which just happens to be behind Carlos' Bakery (Buddy's, The Cake Boss from the Food Channel). There we heard about the history of Carlos' bakery and had one of their sensational cannolis. The lines to get into the bakery are usually very long, so we decided to return after the tour for those who wanted to purchase something there.

From there we wandered toward the west and learned why Hoboken suffered so dramatically during Superstorm Sandy. Hoboken is basically shaped like a bowl and when the waters breached the shores of the Hudson River, the waters filled the bowl of Hoboken causing some of the most severe flooding anywhere in NJ.

While learning more about the colorful and sometime dark history of Hoboken, we arrived at a historic brick oven bread factory and bakery, called the Antique Bakery, and tasted some of Hoboken's famous fresh baked Italian bread dipped in olive oil. From there we wandered through town to the birth place of the most famous resident of Hoboken, Frank Sinatra. His home is no longer there, but a star in the sidewalk depicts that location. It was interesting to find out much about Sinatra's relationship with Hoboken...we will not spill the beans about that.

After that we walked to Lisa's Deli where we ate yummy homemade mozzarella sandwiches and then watched Angelo Lisa prepare and make mozzarella cheese from scratch. We also tasted it afterwards, and many could not help but buy some of the wares of his deli. Then off to Gambino's Pizzeria for a slice of brick-oven-baked pizza and a well-deserved rest for our weary feet. Finally we ended the tour with coffee and dessert at Sweet Cup Cakery and Empire Coffee. As we walked back to the PATH Station, we ended the tour with a final stop in front of Carlos' Bakery. The lines did thin out so many of our tour decided to check out the famous TV bakery and see if they



could get a peek of Buddy, the Baker.

The tour was extremely informative and all had a tremendous time. The RAA Member Services Committee will consider running another tour so if you missed this one, or want to experience it again (who wouldn't), please sign up as soon as it is posted on the RAA website. ✨



Congratulations 2013 Loyal Sons & Daughters!



Front row, left to right: Charles A. Churchill RC '59; Jeanne M. Fox DC '75, CLAW '79; M. Wilma Harris DC '66; Houshang L. Parsa RC '80. Back row, left to right: Michael T. Beachem LC '73, GSED '78, '84; Steven M. Darien RC '63; Joseph H. Lemkin RC '90; David J. Singer CC '01. See our Fall 2013 issue for more information on these outstanding volunteers and the evening's celebration.

CORRECTION: In 1766 Magazine's coverage of the 2012 Loyal Sons and Daughters event, there was an omission in the bio for Juanita Lewis, RC '88, UCN '94. Her complete updated bio is printed below.



Juanita Lewis, RC '88, UCN '94

Juanita has been one of the most dedicated of the alumni volunteers who formed the Rutgers African-American Alumni Alliance (RAAA). She served multiple terms as its President and is currently President Emeritus of the RAAA. In 2007, she spoke out in defense of the Rutgers Women's Basketball Team after they had been publicly maligned on the radio by a radio host. Under her leadership, the RAAA exhibited an increased presence on campus including participation in Homecoming and fundraising for the Paul Robeson Scholarship. In 2009, Juanita was awarded the "Block R Award" for her commitment to the university and to promoting diversity among its alumni. A shining example of Rutgers leadership in her home community, Juanita became a volunteer with the Red Bank Education and Development Initiative; and she went on to be elected, twice, to the Red Bank Board of Education. She currently serves as a Red Bank Councilwoman and proudly proclaims her Rutgers credentials.

The RAA thanks you for showing your Rutgers & Jersey Pride — and helping the hurricane relief effort in our state!

The Rutgers Alumni Association offered free shipping for shirts sold exclusively through *1766 Magazine*. Over \$4,500 was raised and donated to the Hurricane Sandy NJ Relief Fund, organized by Governor Chris Christie and First Lady Mary Pat Christie to aid, comfort, and rebuild New Jersey. Thank you to all those who helped in this effort!



RAA Hurricane Relief committee co-chair Cara Bufanio MGSA '85 (right) with First Lady Mary Pat Christie.



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RAA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JULY 2013

- 7/6 **Annual Trenton Thunder Baseball Outing**
7:05 p.m., Arm & Hammer Park
(formerly known as Waterfront Park), Trenton, NJ
- 7/13 **Young Alumni Beach Party at Bar A**
4:00 - 8:00 p.m., Bar Anticipation, Lake Como, NJ

AUGUST 2013

- 8/10 **RAA Annual Fishing Trip**
Atlantic Highlands Harbor Marina, Time TBD
Visit www.RutgersAlumni.org for more information

OCTOBER 2013

- 10/26 **HOMECOMING**
Football —Rutgers vs. Houston
Game time and other events TBD
Visit www.RutgersAlumni.org for more information

To register, or for more
information about
these events, call the RAA
at 732-932-7474
or visit our website at:
www.RutgersAlumni.org



PURCHASE TICKETS NOW!

Annual Trenton Thunder Baseball Outing

Saturday, July 6, 2013

7:05 p.m.,
Arm & Hammer Park, Trenton, NJ

See the N.Y. Yankee double AA affiliate
play the Reading Phillies and stay after
the game for spectacular fireworks!

Parking is \$3.00 and tickets are still just \$8.00.
Go to the RAA website for tickets.