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# Hartford Smith College Club

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Spring 2013

## Board Members 2012-2013

### PRESIDENT

Michelle Doucette  
Cunningham, '88  
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### VICE PRESIDENT

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(formerly Magno)  
[amy87@alumnae.smith.edu](mailto:amy87@alumnae.smith.edu)

### ALUMNAE ADMISSION COORDINATOR & BOOK AWARDS CHAIR

Heather Page, '00  
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### SECRETARY/NEWSLETTER EDITOR -- VACANT

### WHERE TO FIND US:

**Email:**  
[hartfordsmithcollegeclub@gmail.com](mailto:hartfordsmithcollegeclub@gmail.com)

**Website:**

<http://alumnae.smith.edu/smithcms/hartford/>

**Facebook:** Look for  
"Hartford Smith College Club"

## From the President's Desk...

by Michelle Doucette Cunningham, '88

Last month, the Hartford Smith College Club hosted a get-together for the Class of 2017, high school seniors who had received their letters of acceptance from Smith for the upcoming year attended as well as their parents. As an alumna approaching her 25<sup>th</sup> reunion, I found myself talking mostly with the parents of the prospective students, to whom I am closer in age.

It was a fun event, filled with the excitement of the students, but also fun for the alums who were re-living their Smith years and describing what it was that made Smith so special. For me, it was a chance to describe the tremendous difference Smith made in my life, in the way I view the world and interact with it. More than anything else, my Smith experience gave me confidence in my own ideas, and the willingness to take risks in voicing them. In my conversation with parents, I ascribed this to Smith being a "safe space" where young women can explore their own thoughts and ask questions in a way that strengthens their curiosity about the world while at the same time expanding their horizons.

Yet, earlier that same day, the bombing in Boston had reminded us all that no one is truly safe.

I felt a little disingenuous using the term "safe space" referring to Smith that night, as if I were trying to reassure the parents about their daughters' safety. But the truth is that in order to engage with the world one must take chances, and this is clear in the college's mission:

"Smith College educates women of promise for lives of distinction. A college of and for the world, Smith links the power of the liberal arts to excellence in research and scholarship, developing leaders for society's challenges."

If we are to make the world a better, more peaceful place for our children's children, we cannot remain aloof and safe behind the gates of our schools, the gates of our community. The vibrancy and excitement of the Class of 2017 reminds us all that the tragedy in Boston can only be overcome if we refuse to be terrified, if we engage actively with our community to improve life for all on this planet. No other experience prepared me for this better than my Smith education.



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## WANTED:

The Hartford Smith College Club is run entirely by volunteers. We've come to honor the wisdom of our grandmothers who always said, "Many hands make light work!" Do you have a little extra time you could devote to helping out with club events? Whether it's occasional help at a college recruiting fair, writing articles for the newsletter, or helping to plan & put on events—WE NEED YOU! Contact Michelle at [m2dc@charter.net](mailto:m2dc@charter.net) or 860-794-4978. If you've offered in the past, please do so again (we lost a few emails of prospective volunteers, but promise it won't happen again!) The following opportunities are available:

### One-time commitments:

- Newsletter Contributors -Fall & Spring
- Community Service Event Coordinator
- Career Event Coordinator
- Art Event Coordinator
- Happy Hour Coordinator(s)

### Short-term commitments (one-year):

- Book Awards Chair
- Newsletter Layout and Design

### Longer-term commitments:

- Alumnae Admissions Coordinator(s)
- Secretary (On-line Communications Coordinator)

# Book Club News

## *Five Reasons to Join the Hartford Smith College Book Club*

*by Amy Sondergeld Kullgren, '87*

Several years ago, I was looking for ways to connect with others. I was a single mother at the time; my son was getting older and no longer required my constant supervision. I felt the need to branch out and leave my comfort zone. I first tried a book club through my town but for many reasons, it wasn't a good fit. I then stumbled across the Hartford Smith College book club which at the time was being coordinated by Ronnie McNamara. I've been a member ever since. Here are just a few of the reasons why I enjoy this club so much.

**It's free** – there are no membership forms to fill out or fees to pay. If you plan ahead, most of the books can be borrowed from your local public library.

**It's flexible** – we meet once a month at Cosi's restaurant in West Hartford Center. There's no need to R.S.V.P. You can come just once or to every meeting, it's up to you. We meet monthly starting in September through June with the exception of December. The schedule is posted on our website and Facebook.

**It's an escape that challenges you**– the books are chosen by the group in June each year for the upcoming reading season. You'll be exposed to books you might never have considered reading. I liken it to physical exercise. If you work out just one way, you aren't exercising your whole body and so you need to vary it up to get that total body workout. Your mind needs to be exercised as well. Reading books of different genres you might not otherwise consider challenges your intellect in ways that you couldn't otherwise accomplish.

**You'll be in the company of women** – and not just women, but extraordinary Smithies! I had a tremendously positive experience at Smith but unfortunately, many of the friends I made while at Smith, live all over the country and so getting together is difficult. This book club gives you the opportunity to connect with other Smithies in the area; from the class of 1955 to the class of 2012! I feel fortunate to have met others at this book club who I now consider to be my friends.

**There are lively discussions** – people come with many different viewpoints and share life experiences. It's wonderful to hear how others feel how the story might have progressed when a book ends with a cliff hanger. Perceptions and interpretations vary and even if no one likes a book that we've just read, those discussions are often even livelier.

My favorite book club meeting is coming up on Monday June 24<sup>th</sup>. We'll be meeting at 6:30pm at Cosi' restaurant in West Hartford center to choose books that we'll be discussing starting in September. I look forward to Anne, Michelle and Scarlet bringing literally bags of books to pass around to be considered as well as Ronnie with her Kindle, downloading book samples. Others bring articles from the New York Times Book Review. It's a great time to connect with other Smithies, to be exposed to other books and to expand your mind. I hope you'll join us.

## Other News

The club sponsored a Yield Party for recently accepted area students. Many alumnae came to this event to welcome these women and to field questions. Many thanks to Heather Page for coordinating this event.



We had a nice turnout for our annual holiday gathering in December. We were able to collect monetary and book donations that were given to Organized Parents Make a Difference, aka OPMAD.



## HARTFORD SMITH COLLEGE CLUB Annual Membership For 2013-2014

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Preferred email address for club communications : \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred phone number for club communications: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Category</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>\$</b>
<b>New Smith Graduates (2013)</b>	Gratis!	0.00
<b>Recent Graduates (2010-2012)</b>	15.00	
<b>Regular Annual Membership</b>	30.00	
<b>Regular Two Year Membership</b>	50.00	
<b>Patron Annual Membership</b>	100.00	
<b>Smith College Pin</b>	10.00	
<b>Book Award Contribution</b>		
<b>Other Individual Contribution</b>		
	TOTAL:	

Please make your check payable to “**Hartford Smith College Club.**” The club is a tax-exempt organization and contributions to the organization may be tax deductible under section 170 of the Tax Code.

Please mail this form along with your check to:

Hartford Smith College Club  
Attn: Membership Chair  
PO Box 271601  
West Hartford, CT 06127-1601

**Visit the club’s website for news about upcoming events!**

<http://alumnae.smith.edu/smithcms/hartford/>

We’re also on Facebook!



# Hartford Area Alumnae Spotlight

**Name:** Leslie Mara, nee Torsiello

**Class Year:** 1983

**Major:** Double major in Government & German

**Her Favorite Smith Memory:** Friendships that she made as a freshman in Morrow House continue today, and she looks forward to reconnecting with some of her old housemates at her reunion later this month.

**Currently lives in:** Bloomfield CT, with her husband Dan, her 13-year old son Ben, 10-year old daughter Kate and a cat named Sam.

**What she's been involved with in the greater Hartford community:** After graduating from Smith, Leslie went to law school at the University of Connecticut. She graduated and worked at several law firms in litigation and trial law before becoming disenchanted. She turned to public service, and networked "in the days of the rolodex" to secure a position as in-house counselor to the commissioner of the Department of Children & Families. The following year she was promoted to Deputy Commissioner. A new administration came in and had someone to fill that position, so she left for a nonprofit, Lawyers for Children, where she was the executive director for five years and helped set up programs in CT, FL and Washington D.C. That was followed by a position as Superintendent of the Connecticut Juvenile Training School where she helped set up the new facility.

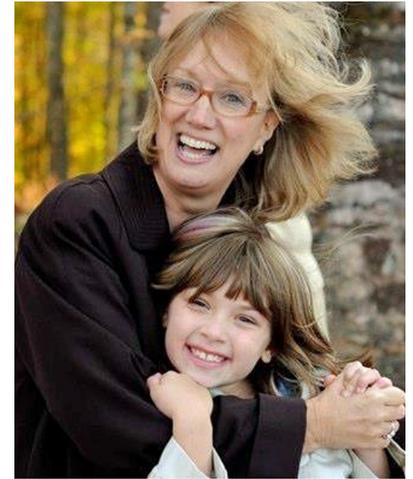
Her focus re-shifted when she went back to state government as Deputy Secretary of State under Susan Bysiewicz. They changed the way Connecticut votes, from lever voting machines to paper ballots. Another initiative involved small businesses. By law all businesses must register with the Secretary of State's office. Leslie says that they eliminated red tape, identified sources of capital and offered technical assistance so small business owners could find ways to be successful even in a bad economy.

When the current administration moved in, Leslie was once again without a job. She turned to Smith College as a resource. She plugged in to the Career Development Office, spoke with Colleen O'Mara, took webinars and spoke with other jobseekers. She says that it's a great way to brush up on skills that you don't have. While the older alums return to Smith to learn about new ways to network and job search, the newer graduates have something to offer such as pointers about social media and tips on which websites to use.

Presently Leslie serves on the Bloomfield Board of Education, and is the Vice Chair for the Alliance for Bloomfield's Children. Both of these are volunteer positions. While she's enjoying the luxury of free time, she will gear up the job search come September.

**What has being involved in the Club meant?:** Leslie says that she has been impressed with the bright and articulate women involved in a variety of endeavors at the meetings, and she looks forward to getting together with other Smithies.

Leslie enjoys scrapbooking, hiking, biking, being at the beach, and networking. She welcomes contact from other alums who want to connect or would like her help. You can contact Leslie by email at [dmara227@gmail.com](mailto:dmara227@gmail.com) or cell phone at 860-614-3790.



## Hartford Smith College Club Annual Meeting

Join Hartford area Smith College alumnae at our annual meeting on June 2. Along with an opportunity to network with other fabulous women, we will have a presentation and discussion of "The State of Democracy in Connecticut" led by local Smith alum, and former Deputy Secretary of State, Leslie Mara. Learn about the latest efforts to increase access to voting, the implications of electronic voting, and other current affairs. Bring your thoughts and ideas and join others for a great afternoon of conversation. The discussion will be followed by a brief business meeting to elect officers for the next two year term.

**When:** Sunday, June 2nd, 2013 from 3 to 5 pm

**Where:** Cosi's restaurant, 970 Farmington Ave, West Hartford (parking in the back)

**Cost:** free, although a collection will be made to offset the cost of refreshments

Hartford Smith College Club  
The Alumnae Association of Smith College  
33 Elm Street, Alumnae House  
Northampton, MA 01063

Non-Profit  
Organization  
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**SAVE THE DATE! Sunday June 2, 2013 3:00-5:00pm Cosi's, West Hartford**  
***Annual Hartford Smith Alumnae Get-Together—"The State of Democracy in Connecticut"***  
Plenty of time for informal networking and generating ideas for club activities in the coming year.

## Book Award Update

With summer fast approaching, the Hartford Smith College Club's Book Award Program is in full swing. Every year, the Hartford Smith Club gives gifts of books to young women from area high schools who demonstrate the academic excellence, leadership and service to their communities that characterize the thousands of women who have graduated from Smith College. This is a great way to honor the accomplishments of some wonderful high school students and to spread the word about Smith in our communities. Last year, the club awarded books to 28 high school juniors from 28 schools in Hartford County, both public and private. This year, the book that we are awarding is *A Pearl In The Storm: How I Found My Heart in the Middle of the Ocean* by Tori Murden McClure '85. McClure is the first woman to row solo across the Atlantic Ocean, and this is the story of her experiences. Many thanks to alumna Alice Cruikshank for bringing this riveting memoir to our attention! We welcome suggestions from alumnae

for books to give that have a connection to Smith. In the past, we have given out *Smith Voices* edited by Prof. Patricia Skarda and *Ariel: The Restored Edition* by Sylvia Plath '55.

As the club seeks to maintain and grow its book award program, alumnae input and support are very much appreciated. If you know of a school that would benefit from receiving a book award, please let us know. If you know of a book with a Smith connection that would capture a young woman's imagination, please let us know. A donation of \$25.00 would cover the cost of a book and postage and would

enable us to add one more school to our program. Certain schools ask if Smith alumnae could attend their award

ceremonies to present these awards or be available to make contact with the recipients in order to tell them about the Smith experience. There are *many* ways to get involved in this worthy cause. Anyone interested in helping with this program, please contact Heather Page.

Thank you again for all that you do for Smith!

Heather Page '00  
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