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Say 'yes' to all of life, Shortall urges at Soup & Hope



Janet Shortall founded Soup & Hope in the conviction that staff members had rich personal stories to share that could inspire those who heard them. Her remarks Jan. 19 in Sage Chapel at the first of the 10th anniversary series of Soup & Hope talks – and the remarks of two other long-time Soup & Hope organizers – bore out that conviction.

Dennis Stein, former editor of Pawprint, and Jennifer Austin, health communications specialist at Gannett, introduced the 2017 Soup & Hope series by recalling its beginning.

Stein said he and former Employee Assembly member Leon Lawrence had worked with Shortall to flesh out the details of time, place and purpose for what they would decide to call “Soup & Hope.” He thanked the audience for coming and urged them to attend future talks. “Consider your job at Cornell as a passport” to the university, and instead of eating lunch at an office desk while shopping online, take part in “this amazing Cornell community,” he said.

Austin created the first poster for Soup & Hope, and has done so for each year since. Through the more than 50 speakers it has hosted, Soup & Hope has given us “time to let go of work and nourish our bodies and souls,” she said, adding that “As is true of Sage Chapel, it is within this winter series of talks that spirit and intellect meet.”

Austin said Shortall joined Cornell in 1994 as assistant director of Cornell United Religious Work. She was active with the university’s Center for Transformative Action and began serving as a crisis manager. Now an associate dean of students, Shortall directs student peer counselors in the Empathy, Assistance and Referral Services. Austin said Shortall, a Unitarian minister, has a style of “deep listening,” that helps “cultivate seeds of hope” in others. Why? “Because when we are seen as loved and worthy, all things become possible,” Austin said.

But, in opening her talk, Shortall described feelings she has struggled with since the November elections that were far removed from the optimism and hope she is known for.

Instead, Shortall has felt grief, despair and fear – a sense of feeling unhinged, numb and displaced. In preparing to give the Soup & Hope talk, Shortall said she began to explore and move through those feelings. She interwove her narrative of that exploration, guided by the wisdom of others, with a performance of Arvo Part's "Spiegel im Spiegel" by Elizabeth Simkin and Jayne DeMakos, community volunteers, and a communal song led by Cornell staffer Leslie Schultz.

"We cannot be grateful for all of life, but in every moment we can be grateful," Shortall said, quoting local monk Brother David Stendl-Rast.

Another theologian, Sharon Welch, had cautioned that "despair, if left unattended, can lead to a quiet cynicism or resignation," Shortall said, adding that, "it is also possible to get beyond grief and despair by surrendering to it as an inevitable part of life, and move through it."

"If we are to return to the richly textured life of the soul and to participate in the soul of the universe, we must pass through that intense region of grief and sorrow," Shortall said. "You can't say 'yes' to just part of life. It's all connected."

Shortall looked to Congressman John Lewis, recalling his speaking from the Sage Chapel pulpit in the 1990s. In the face of the adversity that marked his life, "I could hear then as now, his stillness, determination and his hope," Shortall said.

What remains, Shortall said, "is the decision to care and to act," to reach out and to learn "what it means to truly live open heartedly."

Shortall ended her reflections affirming all that prompted her to found Soup & Hope to begin with: "I want to keep saying yes ... to keep my heart open ... to live with gratefulness that we have this day – this day – and we have each other."

Editor's note: Less than a week after the Jan. 19 Soup & Hope talk, Leon Lawrence has died. We pay tribute to the positive effect he had on the lives of those around him and at Cornell, including his role in the creation of Soup and Hope, and refer readers to the article "[Leon Lawrence, Former Diversity Administrator, Dies at 74](#)," from the College of Architecture, Art and Planning.

Outdoor Education helps all Cornellians scale new heights



“Move your left arm up as high as you can and to the left ... a little farther left ... there, you got that hold? OK, pull up and at the same time with your right leg reach to the right ... no, go a little higher ... OK, you’ve got it now.”

With detailed verbal instructions, Rob Cook, biking and special programs coordinator for Cornell Outdoor Education (COE), guided Angela Winfield, Cornell’s director of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity, to the top of the wall at the new Lindseth Climbing Center – twice.

The climbs were no different than the hundreds of others made by Cornell community members – except that Winfield is blind. She had climbed before, so she had little to prove to herself. But Winfield wanted to demonstrate that by thinking creatively, COE staff could expand the reach of their programming within the Cornell community, and that with proper support systems, “staff members – regardless of their background or abilities – can be engaged and involved and participate in the wealth of recreational and cultural benefits available to them,” she said.

“We want staff from all backgrounds to thrive,” Winfield said. “And that means that they not only be able to show up and fully engage in their work, but that if they have an interest in a program Cornell offers to all members of the community, we are willing, within the guidelines of reason and safety, to help make their participation possible.”

Marc Magnus-Sharpe, the Lindseth Director of COE, agreed. “Our mission is developing teamwork, leadership and growth,” he said. “That mission serves everyone, regardless of age or ability, not just the athletic types. We provide team-building to every department and every person, and we believe that through experiential learning, or learning by doing, all members of the Cornell community can set personal challenges that will stretch them toward greater achievement. Our role is to make sure that anyone who participates in our programs feels welcomed and supported.”

In the four years he has led COE, Magnus-Sharpe has worked to make the unit more inclusive. Last year he hired Karel Hilversum as the director of the Cornell Teamwork and Leadership Center, and the center’s new coordinator, Marcus Brooks. “All of COE benefits from the broader experience represented in our leadership team,” Magnus said. He also has begun cross-campus collaborations with Winfield’s department, with LaWanda Cook, principal investigator at Cornell’s Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability, and with the Cornell Health Center’s Nature Rx program.

In recognition of his inclusion goals, Magnus-Sharpe received Cornell’s inaugural President’s Award for Innovation in Diversity and Inclusion in November 2016. Also in 2016, COE received the David J. Webb Program Excellence Award from the Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education.

To Magnus-Sharpe, Winfield’s climb is a metaphor for the learning that Cornell offers: “Every day we are feeling our way through complex systems, not always sure of our next move. But we can succeed if we find people who can help guide us.”

For Winfield and Cook, those lessons went both ways: “Me climbing with Rob – and us learning from each other – is inclusion in practice,” Winfield says. “It may be a small step, but it is a step in the right direction.”

Custodial staff key to diversity and inclusion climate on campus

Who is most likely to notice if someone is struggling with opening a door or having difficulties finding a bathroom – or likely to overhear a racially based or sexually charged joke or anecdote? Who is key to setting an underlying climate of diversity and inclusion on campus?

At the fifth annual Employee Workshop for Building Care Custodial Staff, held Jan. 12 in the Statler Auditorium, a number of the speakers noted that custodial staff are often witnesses to actions, words and conditions that would otherwise go unnoticed.

“You are the folks who know what is happening in your building,” said Andrea Haenlin-Mott, addressing the more than 400 custodial staff attending the workshop. “You notice if snow removal is needed, if ramps are slippery, if objects protrude into passageways, or if lifts or elevators aren’t working properly.”

Haenlin-Mott also described the all-gender, single access restrooms signage initiative that her office completed last year, not just to meet the needs of those who identify as transgender, but also for those whose disability or age requires the assistance of a family member who might be of another gender.

Angela Winfield, director of the Department of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity and the university diversity officer for staff, explained how Cornell goes beyond the compliance of the Equal Employment and Educational Opportunity act through its “any person ... any study” mission that is the basis of the Open Doors, Open Hearts, Open Minds statement. She also provided an overview of Cornell’s diversity and inclusion framework, *Toward New Destinations*, reviewing its four core principles: composition, or the demographics of the Cornell community; engagement, or how committed employees are to their work; inclusion, or how employees feel about their place in the workplace; and achievement, or how employees are growing or developing.

“The secret ingredient” to a diverse and inclusive campus, she said, “is you.” Staff need to make sure they are getting the tools they need to work, and they set an underlying tone for the climate for inclusion and diversity on campus.

Human resource professionals for Infrastructure Properties and Planning Donna-Marie Parker, Bob Wakeman and Becky Hill discussed how staff need to be aware of their surroundings and those around them. While staff should show consideration for others, they need to be aware of how their actions might be perceived. Is it appropriate to be friends with students on Facebook or to accept an invitation to a student party? Both activities can place staff members in vulnerable situations, they cautioned.

Ulysses Smith, lead diversity and inclusion strategist for the Department of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity, led a scenario-based discussion on some of the “hot topics” that his office has dealt with recently concerning social media, sexual harassment, race and gender inclusion. He showed how to have healthy conversations about these situations and closed with advice on what it means to be someone’s ally, especially in a workplace setting.

“The spark for many of the agenda items came from the campus dialog on universal access restrooms and our work last year to support the university initiatives,” said Ben Kuo, associate vice president for facilities management. “As we think about truth, respect, excellence, teamwork and integrity, the concepts of diversity and inclusion embody these values in the deepest possible way.... Our roles in maintaining our campus are critical to creating an environment that is inclusive.” He hoped that the custodial staff would use the dialogues they had during the workshop “to interact, question and grow in your understanding, and to build upon the great work that you do every day.”

Cornell Dining welcomes new director

Dustin Cutler, Aramark Corporation resident district manager for the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, has been appointed the new director of Cornell Dining, announced Pat Wynn, executive director of Campus Life Enterprise Services, last week. A central New York native, Cutler will begin his position at Cornell Jan. 30.

The incoming director has held various roles with the Aramark Corporation. Cutler began his career with Aramark by managing operations for the Olympic Village in Athens in 2004, and built on that role as senior operations manager for the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Beijing in 2008. These opportunities allowed him to gain food and beverage service experience while appreciating the things he admires most: great food, sports and serving others.

In addition to his experiences at Aramark, Mr. Cutler has managed various aspects of food and beverage operations at Major League Baseball's Turner Field, New Orleans Convention Center and Emerald Coast Convention Center, GlaxoSmithKline and Palm Beach County Convention Center.

Dustin earned his B.S. in hotel and restaurant management at Niagara University,

"Dustin wasn't interested in a new university dining director position, until he heard the phone call was about a job at Cornell," said Wynn. "We are thrilled to have him on board, and are very proud to welcome him back home to the Finger Lakes region."

Cutler, his wife Marissa and their daughter Olivia are looking forward to living in the local area, cooking, boating, playing

sports and taking in the occasional winery tour.

New year benefits checklist

January is a great time to review and update your benefits for the year ahead. Here are some tips from your friends in Human Resources to make sure your benefits on track for 2017. (Note that this is an incomplete list, and not all items apply to all Cornell employees). If you have any questions, contact your [HR representative](#) or benefits@cornell.edu.

- **Review your 2017 benefits elections.** For example, confirm that dependents and contributions to your retirement savings are correct. Log into [Workday](#); click the Benefits icon, then scroll to bottom left of page under “View” and select “Benefit Elections.”
- **Update personal data:** While you’re in Workday, confirm that your personal contact information such as mailing address is up to date. And check out the [professional profile](#) feature, which makes it easy to share career information such as experience, skills and certifications with other colleagues at Cornell.
- **Check your first pay stub** to make sure withholding amounts are correct. In [Workday](#), select the “Pay” icon; then make a selection in the “Payslips” area at bottom right of screen.
- **Did you change healthcare vendors during Open Enrollment?** Confirm that your doctor is in the new network and show your new ID card to providers so your claims are processed correctly.
- **Flexible spending accounts (FSA):** Make sure you know the [deadlines and details](#) regarding claims submission deadlines, rollovers and extensions for 2016 Medical and Dependent Care FSAs.
- **Tax season is here:** Did you know you can receive your W2 electronically? Here’s how to [download a PDF of your W2](#).
- **Wellness:** Schedule any preventive screenings or annual checkups. And take advantage of the wealth of fitness, nutrition, parenting, de-stress and other [programs](#) offered at Cornell!
- **Performance Dialogues:** Make the most of your performance dialog with these useful [tools and resources](#).
- **Expand your knowledge:** Resolve to advance or learn a new skill in 2017. Check out the many [career development](#) opportunities listed in the [Career/Life Digest](#) (easily accessible 24/7 from a blue banner button on the [HR home page](#)), or set aside 15 minutes a day to take a free course from [Lynda.com](#) or [SkillSoft](#). Or why not make this the year you take advantage of Cornell’s excellent [education benefits](#) and [pursue a degree](#)?

Sue Brightly is a communications marketing specialist in the Division of Human Resources.

Empire State provides real-world degree pathways

Staff members interested in pursuing a degree through SUNY Empire State College (ESC) are invited to attend a lunchtime networking event with Cornell employees who are ESC alumni, Feb. 9 at 12:30 p.m., at the East Hill Office Building, room 140.

ESC is a regionally accredited college granting bachelor, associate and master’s degrees that also offers mentoring services and individualized academic instruction. The college has partnered with Cornell to provide a partial deferment of tuition for Cornell staff members, greatly reducing their cost to attend ESC.

Many Cornell staff members have received degrees from ESC while continuing to work at Cornell.

Kevin Mooney is an ESC bachelor degree candidate who works in Cornell’s Office of the Treasurer as cash management representative, a role he has excelled in for the past two years. Mooney chose to pursue a degree from ESC because of the

flexibility Empire offers in taking courses. He also notes that his pursuit of further education would not have been possible without the flexibility Cornell offers as an employer.

Mooney is grateful to his supervisor, Debra Federation, director of cash management, for that flexibility. “All throughout my career here at Cornell, my supervisors have been incredibly supportive of my efforts to get my accounting degree,” he says. “Debra has allowed me to rework my schedule whenever possible in order for me to meet a course-related deadline.”

Federation takes a pay-it-forward approach to her leadership, noting, “In my time at Cornell, my supervisors have always encouraged me to continue to learn and grow in my own job and beyond. This should be the goal of any supervisor – to better their workplace and those who are part of it.” She believes that continued training is the key to personal growth and to promotion within the university.

Mooney also credits his ESC mentor for his success: “Thanks to [him], I have saved considerable time and expense while pursuing my degree. [He] has really placed an emphasis on helping me get my degree as efficiently as possible.” Mooney has supplemented his ESC coursework with prior learning assessments (PLAs), or the experience he has already had at the treasurer’s office, in past accounting roles at the Statler Hotel, and in training he took through the Division of Financial Affairs.

ESC student Carmelo Melice has taken a similar path, supplementing his SUNY Empire education with transfer credits and new experiences. Melice is a custodian S02 and, through Cornell’s rotational assignment program, has gained experience in finance and accounting.

Although he is pursuing a B.S. in business, management and economics at ESC, Melice has taken the past two semesters off to pursue emergency medical technician training. Melice enjoys attending a school that allows him to “pursue higher education and still maintain a balance – on your own time, at your own pace.”

A full-time employee, parent, and active member of the community, Melice has found ESC staff and faculty, “a tremendous resource, ready to answer questions and point me in the right direction when in need.”

He continues, “I urge everyone, no matter their background or profession, to give ESC the opportunity to impress you!”

Michele Cowen ESC ’16, human resources assistant, has certainly been impressed by her time at ESC. Cowen received her B.S. in business, management and economics, concentrating in management. She says, “I had a goal to complete my degree in one year and I was able to do that! “

Cowen accelerated her degree completion by drawing on her professional and life experience, noting that she was able to earn 23 PLA credits in her degree plan. “My positions at Cornell as well as professional development activities [served] as the foundation for my PLAs,” she said.

Cowen appreciates the supportive culture of the ESC community. “My mentor was phenomenal,” says Cowen. “He was available through phone and email and responded to me within a day.”

She looks forward to sharing more of her experiences at the upcoming SUNY Empire networking event and panel discussion, Feb. 9 at 12:30 p.m., in the East Hill Office Building, Room 140. For details, contact Carolyn.Headlam@esc.edu, 607-273-4536.