



Among this year's Blue Hen Ambassadors are three Southern Delaware students, FROM LEFT, Victoria Richardson, Komal Pandya and Brittany Jackson.

away from the Newark campus. She has lived there for four years and attended Sussex Central High School.

Like Richardson, Pandya said she decided to go to UD because it was convenient for her to be in state and close to home. She said she absolutely loves the University's campus and atmosphere.

"As I started visiting the schools, I realized Delaware was the place I wanted to be," Pandya said.

Pandya said she decided to become a Blue Hen Ambassador because she was impressed by the way her tour guide portrayed the University when she went on a tour as a prospective student. She thought that becoming a Blue Hen Ambassador would be a great way to show pride in UD.

At Sussex Central High, Pandya said she learned about the University through college fairs and from representatives who visited to talk about the advantages of coming to UD.

She also said the University promoted the Associate in Arts program, offered on Delaware Technical and Community College campuses in Dover and Georgetown, and the state Student Excellence Equals Degree (SEED) scholarship program.

Pandya, who has lived in all parts of Delaware, said increased student representation from Southern Delaware would be significant for the University as it seeks diversity on campus.

"If there were more students from Southern Dela-

'As I started visiting the schools, I realized Delaware was the place I wanted to be.'

— Komal Pandya, sophomore

ware, it would help UD," Pandya said. "Seeing more students from Southern Delaware would bring a lot of diversity to the University."

Brittany Jackson, 21, is a senior biological sciences major from Lewes. She has lived in the Lewes area her entire life and attended Cape Henlopen High School.

Jackson said she was "almost positive" that she wanted to go to UD from the beginning of her college search. She said she was impressed with the study abroad program and the undergraduate research program, and has been able to participate in both of these programs while attending UD.

Jackson also said she wanted to distance herself from home but also be able get back quickly if she needed to. She pointed out the differences between the environments of Sussex and New Castle counties, saying New Castle County is more crowded and dense, industrial and influenced by Philadelphia, while Sussex County contains many farms, crop fields and beaches. "It's nothing like up north," she said.

Jackson said the University was involved during her high school days by providing the pre-collegiate Academic Challenge program, which enabled students in the Sussex County school districts to take advanced English and math classes so that by the time they reached their junior and senior years in high school, they would be able to take UD classes at the Delaware Technical campuses.

During her sophomore year at UD, Jackson helped put together a video trying to reach out to Delaware's middle school and high school students in conjunction with the University's *Commitment to Delawareans*, a program that provides a roadmap for students as they prepare themselves to apply for college.

Jackson said the program helps steer Delawareans on the right path to gain acceptance to UD.

As a Blue Hen Ambassador, Jackson has been involved in a Just for Delawareans panel that helps promote the school to younger Delaware students.

She said students can have a great time and receive a great education at the University of Delaware. 

Building connections

Three UD colleges help residents define the Heart and Soul of Sussex County

BY MICHELE WALFRED

SOUTHERN DELAWARE — HISTORICALLY isolated by the Chesapeake Bay, Delaware River and Bay, Atlantic Ocean and inland bays — always enjoyed a protected rural, small-town lifestyle until the mid-20th century, when an explosion of modern infrastructure, such as the construction of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge in 1952, brought sudden changes to the region.

Generations of Delmarva residents, who practiced an agrarian-based culture and enjoyed the folksy quiet of their hometowns, were faced with a new reality — that their way of life was in transition. Balancing old-fashioned traditions against a new influx of curiosity and culture from tourists and new homeowners was, and remains, a challenge. Once easily defined, Southern Delaware, and in particular Sussex County, became a complex region to describe.

Rediscovering and redefining that communal identity is a goal Bill McGowan relishes. A Wilmington native, McGowan has lived in Laurel for 30 years and appreciates challenges that are presented from multiple perspectives.

McGowan is the University of Delaware Sussex County Cooperative Extension agent for community development and director of UD's Coastal Community Enhancement Initiative (CCEI).

Created in 2006 with state appropriations, CCEI is a partnership among public service arms of three



University of Delaware colleges: College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, College of Marine and Earth Studies, and College of Human Services, Education and Public Policy.

In the summer of 2008, McGowan launched the Heart & Soul of Sussex County project, an attempt to identify the tangible and intangible characteristics that comprise southern Delaware communities.

McGowan traversed the county, visiting schools, businesses, garden clubs and church groups, where he encouraged the public to participate in sharing their definitions of Sussex County. Aided by newspaper advertising, a new Web site and response boxes placed throughout the county, McGowan collected more than 1,000 heart-felt impressions: the perfect penmanship of a retired schoolteacher, the quick jottings of someone on the go, carefully composed photographs of special places, even an original song. All were definitions that needed to be synthesized into

UD's Bill McGowan developed a project to define the Heart and Soul of Sussex County.



preliminary concepts offered as discussion topics.

Ultimately, when residents were asked the questions “what do you cherish most?” and “what would you regret losing?,” McGowan observed recurring themes in the responses. He couldn’t help notice that while there were distinct differences among answers, the similarities shared among diverse groups who call themselves Sussex Countians were far more significant.

“Heart & Soul is who we are. It’s what makes us special. It’s our people, places, events, those beautiful and quirky things that make Sussex what it is,” McGowan says. “It’s the stuff you don’t think about on a daily basis, but if it goes away, we lose a little bit of who we are.”

McGowan assembled those characteristics into value statements and presented them to a cross section of residents, business owners and community leaders to consider the collective results.

Using audience response technology at workshops, participants voted in degrees on how much they agreed or disagreed with the presented statements. Survey results were instantaneous, displayed in graduated colorful bar graphs. Then the audience was asked to deliberate further, and they were challenged to examine what had been missed in the mix.

After an hour of friendly, kitchen-table style conversations, they were asked the same questions again. In the second round, their points of views had evolved significantly.

And this fact was perhaps more important than the actual answers. The communal process in action was noteworthy.

The assembled group, many of them strangers before the meeting, began to think of themselves as a singular community.

Expressive, respectful and different in many ways, what came to the surface was that all of them had a common affection for Sussex County.

As its name implies, that is what Coastal Community Enhancement Initiative is all about. Jim Falk, director of the Sea Grant Marine Advisory Service and CCEI partner, feels UD’s commitment to the region can make a difference using the University’s educational and outreach expertise.

“Coastal communities across the country are facing rapid growth in population,” says Falk. “This is changing the face of many of these communities as they work to find ways to address the inflow of new residents (many of them retirees) and deal with increased traffic congestion and the ever-changing landscape due to both residential and commercial development.”

Bernie Dworsky, CCEI member and policy scientist with UD’s Institute for Public Administration, agrees that changes for Southern Delaware have been substantial. “CCEI is an opportunity to marshal the resources of the University of Delaware and work with various governments and community organizations throughout Sussex County in addressing issues related to the changes,” Dworsky says. “All three colleges participating in CCEI have had a long history of individual involvements in Southern Delaware. CCEI offers a way to collaborate and coordinate those efforts.”

The Heart & Soul project is one of several public issues CCEI hopes to bring before communities, providing the tools, venues and opportunities to think of the larger picture.

By becoming a catalytic organization in Southern Delaware, CCEI works across existing lines of division, geography and other boundaries that in the past have traditionally kept people apart. CCEI strives to engage communities to build resources, capacity and political will for change.

There will be much to discuss. Land use, heritage tourism, farm and forest preservation, broadband availability, appreciating the cost and benefit of growth, community planning and visioning and using new technologies such as Future Scan and Community Viz all fall under what will be CCEI’s very large umbrella. 



Every crab counts

University helps protect regional treasure: horseshoe crabs BY ELIZABETH BOYLE

HORSESHOE CRABS ARE AMONG THE WORLD’S OLDEST and most fascinating creatures. The earliest horseshoe crabs were crawling around Earth’s shallow coastal seas for at least 100 million years before the dinosaurs even arrived, about 200 million years ago. Since that time, Earth’s land masses have shifted dramatically and thousands of other species have come and gone, but horseshoe crabs have survived and today remain much as they were those millions of years ago.

The animals — which are actually more closely related to spiders and scorpions than crabs — are a vital part of the ecosystem. Horseshoe crab eggs are an important food source for fish, gulls and migratory shorebirds. A significant connection has been identified between the arrival of spawning horseshoe crabs on Delaware Bay beaches and the spring migration of many species of shorebirds that stop along those shores to rest and feast on horseshoe crab eggs. Rec-

ognizing the great importance of these creatures, the state of Delaware named the horseshoe crab its official marine animal in 2002.

Of the four species of horseshoe crabs that exist in the world, three are found in the western Pacific, from Japan to Vietnam. One species, *Limulus polyphemus*, is found along the western Atlantic coast from Maine to the Yucatán Peninsula, with the center of the population in Delaware Bay.

Concern about recent declines in Delaware Bay’s horseshoe crab population due to overharvesting and deterioration of spawning grounds has spurred research to ease pressure on the animal. The University of Delaware and the Delaware Sea Grant College Program have multiple efforts under way to help ensure these important animals are around for many years to come.

One project is aimed at stemming overharvesting of the animal, which is used as bait in the eel and

Recent declines in the horseshoe crab population have spurred research designed to ease pressure on the ancient creature. Photo by Lisa Tossey

For more information about the University of Delaware Coastal Communities Enhancement Initiative, visit the Web site at www.ccei.udel.edu/index.html.