RESIDENTIAL LIFE AT WESLEYAN
Holistic Individual and Community Development

By Christine Ridout P ’04

LET’S ANSWER THE “BIG” ONE FIRST: THERE ARE NO NUDE dormitories at Wesleyan. Folklore and rumors are inevitable on college campuses and the nude dormitory story has been running around Wesleyan for a while—it was even in The New York Times. But, here’s the real scoop: the college’s policy on nudity in public areas is that it constitutes harassment and is not permitted. Should it occur, resident officials are required to stop it, reporting it to higher authorities if necessary. End of rumor. RIP.

Now, Residential life is an integral part of the Wesleyan experience. The university believes that learning takes place everywhere, not just in classrooms, and that residential life facilitates informal, peer learning. In a residential setting, students can study together, help each other with work, talk about issues raised in class or about broader issues that may be in the news. A residential setting creates opportunities for casual social interaction, learning about other cultures and ways of life, discussing differences, emotional support in times of difficulty, and even the nitty gritty like how to run the laundry machine (Don’t laugh, my son didn’t know. Where did I fail?).

The Four Year View

Residential life over four years is structured to reflect students’ growing maturity and independence. From first-year dorms to program houses, apartments, individual wood frame houses, and off-campus housing, students may select a setting they feel meets their needs.

Except for freshmen. First-year students are required to live in residence halls that have a high level of staffing and very supportive environment. The obvious purpose is to provide the...

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MOVING THOUGHTS

By Carol and Jim Blann P ’04

OUR TIME LINE IS GETTING CONFUSING, BECOMING EVEN obsolete. After we spent 18 years wisely considering the future, thinking that when she’s X years old, she’ll do XYZ, Em magically turned 18 in real years, applied to college and left us. She’s so happy at Wesleyan (her experience there during her first year exceeded even our hopes), and it’s effortless to feel thrilled by her enthusiasm and tremendous growth in thinking and learning. Nevertheless... she’s left us and our family will never be the same again. We weren’t prepared enough.

When Emily was a little girl we loved her non-adult version of time. She might tell us a story starting with, “When I’m the mommy and you’re my kids...” It sure hadn’t occurred to her that time went only in one direction (and she has been consistent in being open-minded). Once her time line settled in to fit reality, she focused on living each phase of life/growth with intensity—no sappy looking backwards and, regarding the future, she had goals and dreams but she spent her energies in the present. We, on the other hand, apparently zoomed back and forth along the line, not realizing that we were flirting with disappointment.

Wouldn’t she always be our little girl dancing to Born in the USA in a tutu (age 3)? Nope. Wouldn’t we always have days of camping and hiking together, our family of four, in August? Wouldn’t she always confide in us? Wouldn’t time be just something to have more of, not something within which growth and change occurred? Not to say we’re out of touch—we loved the reality, the changes, the growth. But apparently a part of...
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residential life

support new students need to make the transition from home to college.

The student-staff ratio is approximately 25:1 and the staff is expected to get to know each student in his/her group and to be able to spot signs of trouble should they occur. Depending on the situation, staff may address concerns directly with the student(s), or, if the problem is ongoing, fill out a Communications Report (part of Wesleyan’s “Address and Report” policy) which goes to the Office of Residential Life and is dealt with appropriately from there.

The goal of “Address and Report” is to catch difficulties before they get out of hand. In general, the university finds that student-to-student contact is the most effective approach to dealing with individual or group concerns, always with the proviso that problems are reported to Residential Life if they are not resolved. Jeff Ederer, Director of Residential Life, says that Wesleyan’s goal is for every student to have a positive experience and to graduate. If intervention is required, the staff is committed to doing so.

As a parent, my first question to Jeff was, “Is the staff (mostly students) equipped to handle these issues?” Jeff explained that staff is put through an intensive, two-week training program that focuses on building community, setting community standards, developing consensus on communal issues, being sure everyone has a voice and feels empowered, and spotting signs of trouble either in an individual or in the larger community.

Residential staff also develop educational programs on topics ranging from spirituality, diversity, communal issues, and vocational issues such as “how to write a résumé.” The staff sets up the program, invites appropriate speakers and/or facilitators, and communicates the time and place to students. These programs enrich life in the dormitories.

Life After Freshman Year

After your son or daughter has successfully navigated freshman year, housing options multiply. Wesleyan provides a large variety of choice not typical of other universities. Students may live in program houses, apartments, wood frame houses or off-campus. Accommodations range from singles to suites for up to six students.

Approximately 26.4% of sophomores live in program housing, 42.4% live in residence halls, and the rest are scattered in other facilities. By junior year, 11.9% live in program housing; residence halls have dropped to 1.4%; 12.9% live off-campus (in buildings not owned by Wesleyan); 38.8% in apartments in “High Rise” (8 floors) or “Low Rise” (3-4 floors); 14.3% “In-Town” (apartments); with the rest scattered. By senior year, 72.2% live in wood frame houses (self-contained houses with 4-6 students and kitchen facilities, but no university-provided furniture); 13.5% off-campus; the rest scattered. Log on to www.wesleyan.edu/reslife/lo/livingopts.html if you would like a list of accommodations and information about them.

Program Housing is one of the most unique aspects of residential life at Wesleyan. It offers students the opportunity to come together and live in a community according to similar interests and beliefs. Ederer refers to these as “intentional communities” where students agree to support the mission statement of the house. The houses also offer regular activities, based on their mission, to the larger Wesleyan community. Program houses are located in wood frame houses, fraternity houses, and in theme-based residence halls (West College, Malcolm X, and Well-Being—a substance free hall—are all open as well to first-year students).

Parents have raised several concerns about housing. One is the discrepancy in quality among wood frame houses. As one parent said, “Some of them are palaces, others dumps, but the price is the same.” The discrepancy arose as Wesleyan purchased the houses from private owners. As we all know, houses come in varying degrees of (dis)repair. Wesleyan is aware of the problem and is addressing it. Ederer says, however, that it will take time to bring all the houses up to equal standards. He emphasizes that all houses do meet uniform safety codes and that the safety of each student is paramount.

Parents have also asked why the wood frame houses are not furnished, putting an additional financial burden on students and families. Ederer says the issue is cost: In comparison to dormitories, wood frame houses are extremely expensive per bed. Wesleyan believes that the benefits of house living outweigh the costs, but to also furnish them would be prohibitive. But, parents, take heart. Many of the houses have some furnishings that have been left by previous students, although it is strictly random. Also, students always have the option of living in furnished rooms on other parts of campus.

Finally, the renovation of Clark Hall has raised questions about where freshmen will live. Because the University has known about the issue for over a year, they have planned accordingly. Residential settings were inventoried for additional space, and the University has identified an equal number of beds on campus for incoming students.

Diversity is a Wesleyan hallmark and is one of the reasons we send our sons and daughters to Wesleyan. Residential life is a mirror of Wesleyan’s diversity. To me Residential Life’s “Celebration Statement” (quoted in part) embodies the Wesleyan spirit:

The Office of Residential Life strives to provide a safe and supportive residential environment which complements and extends students’ educational experience. Student-centered programs and services are developed and implemented with an emphasis on holistic individual and community development; student leadership; individual responsibility; advocacy of academic inquiry; and freedom of thought, opinion and expression in the spirit of mutual respect.

For information about residential life, log on to www.wesleyan.edu/reslife or call 860-685-3550. Jeff Ederer is happy to speak to parents about their concerns.

Chris Ridout P ’04 is the new editor of PARENTLINE, replacing graduating editor Lynn Stowe Tomb. Please write to her with your questions and ideas at cridout@mediaone.net.
Wesleyan parents around the world share their daughters and sons with the faculty and staff in Middletown for four short years. They also have emotions in common, ranging from anxiety to pride and perhaps some difficulty in “letting go” and a strong desire to stay in touch. There’s always the phone and e-mail, of course, but many parents stay connected by volunteering for Wesleyan. Whether it’s a one-time event or a four-year commitment, these parents lead a parallel life to their students’—pursuing a way to be involved without interfering, and reaping numerous, sometimes surprising, rewards in the process.

There is a wide array of possibilities for volunteerism at Wesleyan—many of which we’ve presented in past issues of PARENTLINE. Some require a Middletown presence—attending Parents Council meetings or greeting other parents at campus events—while others are fulfilled in your home towns: hosting local events, fundraising calls, and calls to welcome admitted student parents.

This spring, I spoke with several parent volunteers, and some common themes emerged. While most initiated their Wesleyan connection because of their sons or daughters, their eventual rewards had more to do with who they were—their skills, careers, and predilections for giving of themselves.

Jean and Edward Pontbriant, P’02, from nearby East Hampton, Conn., first heard about a building rehabilitation project in Middletown through a Wesleyan newsletter. The clean-up of the beautiful old house—the former home of Singer sewing machines which was to be converted into artists’ studios, exhibit space, and a few apartments—was the undertaking of Alderhouse, a non-profit organization that is involved in Middletown’s North End redevelopment.

This type of community service was familiar to the Pontbriants, who have always participated in PTO and other community activities with their children. Jean said in a phone interview in April that the family has been involved for many years with Paul Newman’s Hole in the Wall Gang camp, with Habitat for Humanity building projects, and with scouting. According to Jean, their Middletown effort, with a group that included Wesleyan alumni and students, but not their son Chris, was just an extension of their many community service projects—Middletown has now become part of their “service territory.”

Many Wesleyan parents and alumni share their experiences and their careers with students on campus by speaking at special events and by being WesSeminar presenters at Homecoming/Family Weekend and Reunion/Commencement. James Grant P’02, who writes successful mystery novels under the pen name of Lee Child, spoke on campus last year to students and their parents with the presentation, “Telling Lies for Fun and Profit: Making a Living Writing Thrillers.” Over the phone he said, “I joined three student writers on a panel that focused mainly on writing as a career. Since I’m a mass-market commercial writer, I was able to tell them about the practical side of making a living as a writer.”

Grant said that he would be glad to volunteer at Wesleyan again, but that he’d like to see the initiative come from the students. “Many Wesleyan parents have interesting lives and careers, but this is the students’ time at Wesleyan. Hopefully they will be proactive in tapping into the great resource that is the Wesleyan family of parents and alumni.”

Beverly Daniel Tatum, ’75, P’04, has spoken on campus twice since her son Travis joined the class of ’04. Author of the book Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria and Other Conversations About Race, she is also Dean of the College at Mount Holyoke College. Invited by students to speak at the Black History Month convocation, she was surprised and moved when she was introduced to the audience by her son. “I’ve spoken at his other schools, and I always check with him first, but I was impressed with his poise and pleased that he was proud of me, too.”

Tatum relishes the connection with her son, but also as an alum she feels that she wants to give back to the school that gave her a “great experience.” “Students of color are hungry to interact with adults of color. Since I was very involved with similar issues of diversity as an African American student at Wesleyan, I can speak to them from my experience. “I am delighted that my son has chosen to go to Wesleyan. I would want to be involved wherever he went to school, but I don’t want to intrude on his experience.”

A common sentiment—being non-intrusive—among parent volunteers, they nevertheless find their own ways to stay connected and be involved, sharing in their sons’ and daughters’ experience on a parallel track.
UNIVERSITY HEALTH SERVICES—
Where the Most Important Student Body is Yours

Davison Health Center will open its doors in August 2001 with a new framework for comprehensive health and wellness services to the Wesleyan community. After lengthy internal analysis of healthcare services, staffing, and patient utilization, as well as an external evaluation with the American College Health Association, existing resources have been reallocated to better meet the needs of our students through the creation of expanded primary care services, the addition of full-time physicians and advanced practitioners (Nurse Practitioner and Physician Assistant), and extended appointment hours for access to Wesleyan University’s Health Services.

The Davison Health Center will be open, during the academic year when classes are in session, from 9 a.m.–9 p.m., Monday–Friday, and 12 p.m.–4 p.m. on Saturdays. Though appointments are encouraged, we will have walk-in availability for urgent care. With the new operational structure, students will access “one-stop shopping” and be evaluated and treated by a prescribing provider in the same visit. During hours that the Health Center is closed, our physician staff, on call 24 hours, seven days a week, will be available for phone consultation with students. In the event that a student needs care after hours, Middlesex Hospital, a comprehensive community health system, is within blocks of the campus, as are local urgent care centers. University Health Services has a relationship with each of the community health facilities, giving Wesleyan students convenient and quick access to care, as well as communication with, and follow-up at, the campus Health Center with our staff. Observation beds will be available at the Davison Health Center, on a case-by-case basis, for those students requiring an overnight stay with R.N. supervision.

The goal of Wesleyan University Health Services is to provide comprehensive, high quality, accessible, cost-effective, personal health and wellness services. We believe that our new focus will provide the route to meeting our goal. As the Director of University Health Services, I welcome your questions and thoughts at any time. Please feel free to call 860 - 685-2656 or e-mail me at rblauer@wesleyan.edu. For more information about our health and wellness services, please see the Parents Handbook. On behalf of all of us at the Health Center, welcome to Wesleyan.

Ruth Blauer
Director of University Health Services

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us held onto the wishes to keep that delicious childhood as is.

So college was a shock in certain ways. She’s proud of us, though, we’ve dealt with it. E-mail and instant messaging are great. Seeing her is more than great. These Wesleyan kids are so smart, such critical thinkers. They’re even smart enough to teach their parents how to separate.

FALL SEMESTER MOVE-IN SCHEDULE FOR STUDENT RESIDENCES
New Students (Class of 2005)
Monday, August 27th (Arrival Day) 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

Continuing Students:
Saturday, September 1st 11:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.
Sunday, September 2nd 11:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.
Monday, September 3rd (Labor Day) 11:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.
Tuesday, September 4th (Enrollment Day) 9:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.

PARENT AND ALUMNI/AE VOLUNTEER WEEKEND
Join us at Wesleyan September 14–16, 2001, to talk about volunteering for Wesleyan, both on and off campus. You’ll hear about admission, career resources, parents fund, special events, and PARENTLINE opportunities. Please call 860 - 685-3756 or e-mail parents@wesleyan.edu if you’d like more information.

HOMECOMING/FAMILY WEEKEND IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER
Mark your calendars for November 2–5, 2001, make your reservations and plan to be on campus for a weekend of enrichment and fun, as the Wesleyan community celebrates together. A preliminary schedule of events will be posted on Wesleyan’s Web site and mailed to all families in September. We hope to see you there!

You’re invited to attend the Parents Council open meeting on Sunday morning, November 4, during Homecoming/Family Weekend. Program information will be announced in the preliminary schedule, which will be mailed out in early September.

SONS & DAUGHTERS PROGRAM: PREPARING FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSION PROCESS, NOVEMBER 18–19, 2001
A joint venture between the Office of University Relations and the Office of Admission, this program helps prepare high school students and their parents for the college admission process. For more information, please call Camille Dolansky 860 - 685-3756 or e-mail cdolansky@wesleyan.edu.

AIRPORT SHUTTLE INFORMATION AVAILABLE ONLINE
For information on the fall 2001 airport shuttle schedule, check out www.wesleyan.edu/studserv/shuttle.html
DEAR PARENTS,

As the co-chairs of your parents organization, we extend a hearty welcome to the parents of the class of 2005 and new transfer students. We look forward to meeting you on arrival day. We, along with other parent volunteers, will be at the Parents Council table at the Student Resources Pavilion/Family Lounge. Please stop by to say hello.

This spring, in the parents council executive committee’s annual meeting with Doug and Midge Bennett, we discussed a number of topics: new faculty hiring, course selection, the new facilities plan, campus dining, parent giving, and Wesleyan’s admissions philosophy. Gatherings such as this are vital to our mission of enhancing our children’s Wesleyan experience.

With your ongoing participation, the dialogue between parents and the university will continue. You’ll have ample opportunity to interact with others during both Volunteer Weekend (Sept. 14–16) and Homecoming/Family Weekend (Nov. 2–5). We invite you to join other parents, students, alumni, faculty and staff, as actively engaged members of this exciting community!

Once again, welcome to Wesleyan!

Ken and Dara Gordon, P ’98, ’01
Executive Committee Co-chairs

PARENTS COUNCIL 2001–2002

The Parents Council continues its work with the appointment of new leadership for the coming year. We are pleased to present the Parents Council Executive Committee for 2001–2002:

CONTINUING LEADERSHIP POSITIONS:
Dara & Ken Gordon
(Michael ’98 & Laura ’01)
Parents Council Co-chairs
Joan Cohen (Roger ’03)
Jamie Schwarzfeld
(Matthew ’03)
Admission Committee Co-chairs
Carol & Jim Blann
(Emily ’04)
Special Events Committee Co-chairs
Christine Ridout
(Timothy ’04)
PARENTLINE Editor

NEW LEADERSHIP POSITIONS:
Susan & Lynn Rotando
(Andrew ’03)
Career Resources Committee Co-chairs

Richard Crockford
(Seth ’04)
Parents Fund Chair

The following are the graduating leaders on the Parents Council:
Robin Lynn & Larry Blumberg
(Daniel ’01), Parents Fund Co-chairs—under their guidance, the Parents Fund exceeded all previous years for participation and total dollars raised.
Cathlene & David Cash (Lukas ’01), Career Resources Committee Co-chairs—two years ago, Cathlene and David began this collaborative effort to tap the powerful career resources of current and past parents.
Lynn Stowe Tomb (Meghan ’01), PARENTLINE Editor—Lynn inspired the writing of many parent contributors and was responsible for the current design and layout of PARENTLINE.
Congratulations and hearty thanks to all of our parent leaders and volunteers for a tremendously successful year.

PARENTS FUND–2001 RESULTS

Our son Danny graduated from Wesleyan this May. He had a great four years and so did we. He was on the student track; we were on the parallel parent track. As active volunteers in the Parents Council, and then as co-chairs of the Parents Fund, our education consisted of learning about Wesleyan’s aspirations. With the willing cooperation of 40 parent volunteers, we called on the parent community to support Wesleyan in its quest for excellence. There’s good news to report.

The Parents Fund has exceeded its goal of $325,000 in gifts and pledges for the year, and there has been a 55% increase in the number of parents donating to the Parents Fund. Support from parents of past students is significant and on the rise.

When Dan received his B.A. in government, we reluctantly graduated with him. However, we take this opportunity to thank all of you heartily for helping Wesleyan to meet its goals for parent participation for 2000–2001.

Robin Lynn and Larry Blumberg P ’01
Parents Fund Co-chairs

Graduating Parents Council Members, bottom left to top right: Dara and Ken Gordon, Cathlene Cash, Robin Lynn, David Cash and Lynn Stowe Tomb (not pictured: Larry Blumberg)
THE PARENTS COUNCIL
The Parents Council was instituted in 1994 to help parents communicate with the University and among themselves and to assist Wesleyan in providing the best education and experiences for its students. Membership is open to any parent who wishes to participate. The council receives administrative support from the office of parent programs, office of university relations.

PARENT LINE

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IMPORTANT DATES

FALL 2001
FIRST SEMESTER
August
20 Mon International undergraduate students arrive
27 Mon Class of 2005, new transfer, visiting and exchange students arrive
29 Wed Students returning from leave, new transfer and exchange students arrive and register for courses
30 Thurs Course registration for Class of 2005

September
1 Sat University housing opens for all returning students
3 Mon Enrollment Day, undergraduate and graduate
4 Tues Classes begin
14-16 Fri-Sun Volunteer Weekend for Parents and Alumni

October
12 Fri Fall break begins at the end of the class day
17 Wed Fall break ends, 8 a.m.

2-5 Fri-Mon Homecoming/Family Weekend
18-19 Sun-Mon Sons & Daughters – See FYI for more information
20 Tues Thanksgiving recess begins at the end of the class day
26 Mon Thanksgiving recess ends, 8 a.m.

November
10 Mon Classes end
11-16 Tues-Sun Reading period
17-21 Mon-Fri Undergraduate final examinations
22 Sat University housing closes at 12:00 p.m.

DECEMBER
10 Mon Classes end
11-16 Tues-Sun Reading period
17-21 Mon-Fri Undergraduate final examinations
22 Sat University housing closes at 12:00 p.m.

SPRING 2002
SECOND SEMESTER
January
18 Fri University housing opens for all students
21 Mon Course registration begins for students returning from leave, new exchange students
22 Tues Enrollment Day, undergraduate and graduate
23 Wed Classes begin

March
8 Fri Mid-semester recess begins at the end of class day
25 Mon Mid-semester recess ends, 8 a.m.

May
7 Tues Classes end
8-12 Wed-Sun Reading period
13-17 Mon-Fri Undergraduate final examinations
18 Sat University housing closes at 12 p.m.
25-26 Thurs-Sun Reunion & Commencement 2002
26 Sun 170th Commencement