

## Amity Hall of Honor 2010

### **Science and Technology**

#### **James D. Potter, Ph. D., FAHA**

James D. Potter, Ph. D., FAHA, class of 1961, earned a BS in Zoology from George Washington University in 1965. He then studied at the University of Connecticut where he received a Ph.D. in Biochemistry in 1970. James went to the prestigious Boston Biomedical Research Institute in the fall of 1970 where he trained as a Postdoctoral Fellow with Dr. John Gergely, a pioneer in the study of molecular mechanisms that underlie striated muscle contraction and regulation. He subsequently joined the Institute as a Staff Scientist in 1974 and also became an Associate in Neurology at Harvard. In 1975, James left the Institute to join the faculty of Baylor College of Medicine as an Assistant Professor (his first faculty position) in the Department of Cell Biophysics. After two short years, he became a faculty member at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine as an Associate Professor in the Department of Pharmacology and Cell Biophysics. He was promoted to Full Professor in 1981. He later became Professor and Chairman of the Department of Molecular and Cellular Pharmacology at the University of Miami, Miller School of Medicine in 1983 at the young age of 38. He has served in that position for over 25 years. During his scientific career, James has published over 380 papers, book chapters, abstracts and reviews in the general area of contraction and relaxation of the heart and skeletal muscles in health and disease; and he has been invited to present his research at more than 160 scientific meetings and conferences. James mentored numerous postdoctoral associates, graduate students and high school students. In 2007, he received the Mentor of the Year award from the Miami-Dade Public Schools Advanced Academic Internship Program for his work with high school students.

In 2008, James decided to step down as chairman to pursue his research full time. A pioneer in the field of muscle contraction and regulation, James is also considered a leader in the investigations of troponin and of cardiomyopathy due to troponin mutations. He received numerous awards for his research, including being named a Fellow of the Muscular Dystrophy Association, an Established Investigator of the American Heart Association and an NHLBI Merit Awardee.

During his long tenure as Chairman, James created an environment that helps young scientists develop into superior scientists. In recognition of his contributions to the University of Miami and to the Miller School of Medicine, James was inducted into the Iron Arrow Honor Society in 2002, the highest recognition for a University of Miami faculty member. James is currently Professor of Molecular and Cellular Pharmacology and is also serving as Senior Advisor to the Dean of the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine.

## **Health and Medical Services**

### **Jeffrey A. Flaks**

Jeffrey A. Flaks, class of 1989, earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Ithaca College in 1993 and a Master's degree in Health Services Administration from George Washington University in 1996.

Jeffrey is the executive vice president and chief operating officer for Hartford Hospital, where he has overseen a dramatic shift in performance, service and culture. Hartford Hospital is one of the largest teaching hospitals and tertiary care centers in New England and one of the busiest surgical centers in the Northeast. Under the leadership of Mr. Flaks, Hartford Hospital has seen a \$25-million improvement in operational performance and overall scores of nearly 95 percent on publicly-reported quality measures.

He launched a new, systematic focus on patient safety and quality and spearheaded, "How Hartford Hospital Works," a nationally recognized hospital-wide culture change initiative.

Mr. Flaks has been a driving force in the development and expansion of many significant Centers of Excellence at Hartford Hospital, including the Henry Low Heart Center, the Helen & Harry Gray Cancer Center, the Total Joint Center and the Trauma Program. And he has led efforts to greatly increase the number of patients who come for complex care to Hartford Hospital from secondary and tertiary markets, resulting in a five-percent increase in market share.

Prior to his appointment at Hartford Hospital, Mr. Flaks served as executive vice president and chief operating officer for MidState Medical Center, also a member of the Hartford Health Care Corporation.

Mr. Flaks' current governance appointments are on the boards of directors of The University of Hartford's College of Education in Nursing and Health Professions, The Connecticut Hospital Association's Diversified Network Services, Inc., The Urban League of Greater Hartford, The Connecticut Children's Museum and The George Washington University Alumni Association. He is a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives.

## **Education**

### **Lawrence M. Schaefer**

Lawrence M. Schaefer, class of 1963, earned a B.S. from Tufts University cum laude in Chemistry in 1967 and a Master of Philosophy degree in Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry at Yale University in 1969. After teaching chemistry and environmental studies at Amity for several years, Larry returned to graduate school where he received a Master of Philosophy in Forestry and Environmental Studies at Yale University and a Sixth Year Advanced Certificate in Educational Administration at Southern Connecticut State University in 1984.

Larry has enjoyed a varied career in education beyond his teaching at Amity. For eleven years he was an administrator at Area Cooperative Education Services, ACES, providing leadership in improving instruction and curriculum to districts throughout the state. In 1987, he began a three year appointment at the Connecticut Department of Education as Bureau Chief for Curriculum and Instruction. In this role he led major professional development initiatives from the Educational Enhancement Act. Because he wanted to return to working directly with teachers and administrators, his next position was as Curriculum Coordinator in the Hamden Public Schools. After two years in Hamden, he was appointed Associate Superintendent in the Milford Public Schools where he served fifteen years including serving as Superintendent in his final year. Currently, Larry works as a consultant dividing his time between two educational organizations, Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, CAPSS, and the Connecticut Center for School Change. His current focus is on improving student learning for all students.

Over the course of his career, Mr. Schaefer has received many recognitions from peers and educational organizations. After teaching at Amity, he received the Environmental Merit Award from the EPA. Larry was awarded the Outstanding Leadership Award in 1988 from the Connecticut Organization for Professional Development after serving as its founding president. In 1993, he received recognition as the Connecticut ASCD Educational Leader of the Year. The National School Boards Association recognized him for his leadership in technology.

In the Milford District, students and faculty awarded him Honorary Life Membership in the Tri-M Music Honor Society for his work in advancing the arts in education. The other, Children's Empowerment Award, was from Kids Day America, International for his work on behalf of struggling learners.

## **Business and Finance**

### **Michael Vespoli**

Michael Vespoli, class of 1964, graduated from Georgetown University with a degree in Business in 1968 and University of Massachusetts with a Masters degree in secondary school administration in 1974.

Mike's rowing career started in 1964 when he joined the Georgetown University crew as a walk-on in his freshman year. After a national championship-winning senior season at Georgetown, Mike went on to win 5 national titles and row on 7 US National teams. He later successfully coached several universities and US National teams. He was the head sculling coach for the 1980 Olympics in Moscow, which the U.S. boycotted.

He started his company, Vespoli USA, in 1980 and it has grown to be the largest racing shell manufacturer in North America. Located in New Haven, CT, Vespoli USA is a world-wide brand sold in over 20 countries. In the company's 30 year history, crews racing in Vespoli shells have won over 55 World Championship and Olympic Medals.

Mike is a former member of the U.S. Olympic Committee for Men's Rowing, as well as a consultant to the President's Commission on Olympic Sports, and was an NBC commentator for rowing in the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. He was inducted into the Georgetown University Athletics Hall of Fame in 1979 and the National Rowing Foundation Hall of Fame 1985. In 2000 he was honored with the "Power Ten" award given to those who are committed to supporting the sport of rowing, both nationally and internationally. Mike received the "Outstanding Contribution to Georgetown Athletics" Award in 2002.

Mike and his wife Nancy established the Vespoli Family Crew Scholarship at Georgetown University in 2003 to provide financial aid to intercollegiate rowers who demonstrate financial need. In 2004, he led a fundraising campaign to save the Tulane University Crew program after the devastating effects of Hurricane Katrina. Mike has been a longtime member of the Georgetown University Board of Regents and currently serves as the Chairman of the Athletics Committee.

## **Government and Public Service**

### **Nancy L. Carrington**

Nancy L. Carrington, class of 1966, graduated from Hartwick College with a Bachelor of Science in Sociology and went on to earn her MBA from the University of New Haven. She currently serves as Executive Director of Connecticut Food Bank, which distributes food and other resources to food-assistance programs in six of Connecticut's eight counties: Fairfield, Litchfield, Middlesex, New Haven, New London, and Windham.

The mission of Connecticut Food Bank is to alleviate hunger. Under Nancy's leadership, Connecticut Food Bank grew from a grassroots, volunteer organization into the largest centralized source of donated, emergency food in Connecticut, feeding more people in the state, including residents in some of the poorest cities in Connecticut.

Nancy has led the effort to grow and strengthen the hunger-relief network in Connecticut so more people will be fed. Nancy, who comes from a family with a long history of public service in Connecticut, works to establish strong foundations and partnerships with community groups, businesses, individuals, government agencies and civic and social organizations. Nancy firmly believes that it is through this collective effort that we as a community can alleviate hunger one person at a time, one neighborhood at a time and one community at a time. A number of organizations have honored Nancy for her service to the community and for her exemplary leadership in helping people in need. These organizations included Connecticut Public Health Association, Interfaith Cooperative Ministries and *New Haven Business Times*.

Nancy joined Connecticut Food Bank in 1984 as a food solicitor, prodding local and regional companies to donate their excess and un-saleable products. Nancy became Executive Director of Connecticut Food Bank in 1989.

In 1989, Connecticut Food Bank, through its one warehouse, distributed 3.61 million pounds of food to 405 food-assistance programs. That was about 7 tons of food every business day. Today,

Connecticut Food Bank, with its three warehouses and two partner sites, distributes 35 tons of food every business day. In 2008, Connecticut Food Bank distributed more than 16 million pounds of food.

Since 1989, Nancy has worked tirelessly to grow Connecticut Food Bank, but she knows more has to be done to fully meet the need in Connecticut. So she remains dedicated to the mission of Connecticut Food Bank.

“Food should not be a privilege. It should be a basic human right. It is appalling to me that there are people in this country without enough food,” Nancy said. “As a nation, we produce enough food to feed everyone. Our challenge, as citizens and neighbors, is getting the food to the people who need it.”

### **Fine and Performing Arts** **Susan Davenny Wyner**

Susan Davenny Wyner, class of 1961, graduated *summa cum laude* from Cornell University in comparative literature and music. She continued her studies at Columbia and Yale Universities. In 1998, The American Orchestra League named her a Catherine Filene Shouse Conductor – a first-time award given by a national panel of conductors and orchestral managers to a conductor poised for major career.

Susan Davenny Wyner has received national acclaim for her conducting. The Library of Congress featured her in its 2003 "Women Who Dare" Engagement Calendar, and the MacNeil-Lehrer Newshour and WGBH Television have presented special documentary features on her life and work.

Susan Davenny Wyner's conducting credits include the Los Angeles Philharmonic, The Czech Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra, Boston Lyric Opera, the Odense Danish Symphony, and Cleveland Orchestra members in three separate benefit concerts. She has conducted concerts at the Hollywood Bowl, at the Tanglewood and Aspen Music Festivals, in Italy and the Czech Republic, and has recorded for Bridge and Albany Records. André Previn, Lynn Harrell, Claude Frank, Peter Serkin, and Emanuel Ax, have been among her guest soloists.

She is Music Director and Conductor of two professional opera companies: Boston Midsummer Opera and Opera Western Reserve (Ohio), in addition to The Warren Philharmonic Orchestra (a professional orchestra near Cleveland, Ohio). From 1999-2005, she was Music Director and Conductor of The New England String Ensemble in Boston, a professional string orchestra that she brought to national prominence. She has held conducting positions at New England Conservatory, The Cleveland Institute of Music, Wellesley College, and Brandeis and Cornell Universities, and she has conducted numerous lecture demonstrations and master-classes in Europe and the States--for the Conductors Guild National Convention, at Harvard and Yale Universities, among many others.

Trained initially as a violinist and violist, Susan Davenny Wyner went on to an international career as a soprano—singing with the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, the Boston Symphony, the

Cleveland Orchestra, the London Symphony, the New York, Los Angeles, and Israel Philharmonics, among many others. She performed regularly with conductors Leonard Bernstein, Erich Leinsdorf, Colin Davis, André Previn, Robert Shaw, Lorin Maazel, Seiji Ozawa, Michael Tilson Thomas, and recorded for Columbia Masterworks, Angel/EMI, Naxos, New World, CRI and Musical Heritage. After a hit and run accident destroyed her singing voice, she began her career as a conductor. In 1998, The American Orchestra League named her a Catherine Filene Shouse Conductor – a first-time award given by a national panel of conductors and orchestral managers to a conductor poised for major career.