

## Gansworth's Novel Garner's National Award



Eric L. Gansworth is a 2006 recipient of the PEN Oakland National Literary Award. A professor of English and Lowery Writer-in-Residence at Canisius, Gansworth was recognized for his novel *Mending Skins*, which focuses on the contemporary

lives and conflicts of Western New York's Indian communities. In presenting the award, Gansworth was cited for "addressing the diversity and uniqueness" of Native American culture.

Established in 1989, the PEN Oakland National Literary Awards honors multicultural literature.

## Vehar's Compositions Reversed



Composer-in-Residence **Persis Vehar** garnered her 22nd ASCAP Plus Award from the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers. The award recognizes composers for excellence in composition.

Vehar's more than 200 vocal and instrumental compositions range from chamber music to large ensembles and include two operas. Her works have been performed internationally.

## Clark Examines Commerce in Old-Regime France



A new book by History Professor **Henry C. Clark, PhD**, tells the story of how early-modern commentators in Europe's most powerful state put aside their country's historic prejudices against merchants and money with

the growth of local and global trade. *Compass of Society: Commerce and Absolutism in Old-Regime France* shows how French observers looked to the expansion of a market-based society for solutions to problems such as France's low-trust culture, statutory privilege and strategic insecurity. The book also sheds light on the broader phenomenon of social adjustment to economic modernization in an era of increasing trade.

*Compass of Society* is Clark's second book. It is available at [www.lexingtonbooks.com](http://www.lexingtonbooks.com) for \$29.71.

## Program for Asperger's Disorder Making a Difference



The Connections Research and Treatment Program at Canisius College is getting high marks from parents. The Autism Spectrum Disorders Research Consortium (ASDRC), comprised of **Robert E. Nida, PhD**, associate professor of education, **Susan Putnam, PhD**, associate professor of psychology, and their colleagues at the University at Buffalo and Summit Educational Resources, examined the effectiveness of Connections, which works to improve

the social skills of children who suffer from Asperger's Disorder (AD). Asperger's is a high functioning form of autism characterized by a lack of social skills, the inability to recognize emotions in others, and narrow, often obsessive interests (see *Canisius College Magazine*, fall 2004).

"The parents, who completed a behavioral rating scale, reported a significant improvement in adaptability and reduction in unusual behavior for their children," said Nida.

Specifically, the parents noted an increase in social skill and behaviors that resulted in invitations to their children to participate in social activities. Such events were reported by many parents to be absent or rare prior to their children's participation in Connections.

Additionally, children in the program were found to be more socially aware of and attentive to peers, and utilized many of the skills taught during the program, such as introducing oneself, initiating and ending conversations, discussing another's interests, and establishing and maintaining appropriate eye contact. The results of the study were published in the peer-reviewed journal *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*.

The research consortium's findings are important because there is a distinct lack of sound, empirical research and proven treatment options for Asperger's Disorder. AD was only officially recognized by the American Psychiatric Association in 1994. Additional information on Connections can be found at [www.asdrc.org](http://www.asdrc.org).

## Special Needs Children Need More Pretend Play

According to new research by **Ellen M. Hamm, PhD**, parents of special needs children need to encourage more pretend and creative play. Hamm's study revealed that parents often introduce their children to low-tech, off-the-shelf, functional toys, which may be easily activated or respond with lights, sounds and moving parts but do not provide a lot of play options.

The toys least frequently chosen by parents were symbolic toys, such as books, play sets, puppets or imaginative toys, which encourage necessary pretend play and creativity, as well as problem-solving, organization and planning.

"Toys are often considered the tools of play in young children ... and the selection of appropriate toys is especially important for young children with special needs," explains Hamm, whose study revealed that while families want more play options for their special needs children, their subsequent selection of toys is not appropriate to meet those outcomes. "The findings point to the need for parents and early interventionists to encourage more pretend and creative play in special needs children."

Hamm is an assistant professor of education and director of the Special Education Program at Canisius. Her research was published in the *Journal of Special Education Technology*.

