

**Introductory Remarks from the Club President
Cornell Club of Greater Buffalo
Becker Farms Scholarship Dinner
Matthew P. Nagowski '05
September 24th 2009**

Good evening.

I would first like to briefly introduce myself for those of you whom I have yet to meet -- and I do hope to meet all of you by the end of the night.

I am Matthew Nagowski -- Class of 2005. Over the summer I -- in a somewhat surprisingly but in a rather pleasant turn of events -- found myself being asked by Jay Brett -- a consummate Cornellian -- Class of 1953 and a past president of the Club -- if I wouldn't agree to take the reigns of our humble Cornell Club for the next year or two.

And well, here I am today in front of you all. So indeed I did say yes to Jay's proposal.

Now, I mentioned that it was surprising and pleasant, because well, as a born and bred Buffalonian and died-in-the-red Cornellian, it means a lot to me that I am able to take on a leadership position for an institution that I have the utmost respect for in a city that I love.

I also say that it is surprising because I only graduated four years ago, and if you had told me while I was still on East Hill that I would soon be back home in Buffalo organizing events like this for the Cornell Club, I probably would have stared at you in disbelief for a second and then gone back to studying for a prelim. But as a favorite professor of mine from Cornell always used to tell me -- life takes funny turns sometimes.

I would first like to thank Becker Farms and Vizcarra Vineyards for hosting us here today – and Oscar and Mindy Vizcarra – Class of 1979 – and especially their daughter Amanda. Without their support and generosity we would not be here tonight. Amanda has created an absolutely lovely and intimate dining and educational experience for all of us to enjoy, and I do hope that you share with your friends and family your glowing reviews of this 100 mile dinner in such a picture-perfect setting. The food, wine, and hospitality has been superb, so thank you.

I also need to thank Warren Emblidge -- Class of 1965 – and his McCullagh Coffee Company – for providing their EcoVerde Coffee that we are drinking tonight. I know that coffee beans don't exactly fit the 100 mile theme of tonight's dinner, but, well, people like coffee and McCullagh is headquartered less than 25 miles away in downtown Buffalo, and it is invigorating to see that Cornellians are becoming committed to the principles of sustainability and responsibility in their business practices.

Now, I think the dinner experience that we have enjoyed tonight – as well as the company that we have shared – is a testament to both the quality of the educational experience that Cornell provides and the amount of value that Cornellians bring their communities.

In fact, since taking the lead of our Cornell Club, I have been overwhelmingly impressed by the amount of contributions that Cornellians have been making to the Buffalo area – and it has been an inspiration to me.

Consider the following: Alumni are taking the lead in developing a Niagara County wine trail to rival our neighbors in Southern Ontario and the Finger

Lakes. And developing nationally recognized programs to enfranchise urban youth in our inner-city. One local alumnus has just been tapped by the Obama Administration as an appointee for the National Labor Relations Board. And another alumnus – a neurologist at UB – has been quoted in the New Yorker for his research. And some of you may have even noticed in the Buffalo News that a Class of 2008 alumnus made a decent splash in the local media when he decided he was going to run for mayor of Buffalo this past summer.

When I was on campus the Cornell administration liked to paint our beloved alma mater as a transnational institution – the land grant university to the world. And given Cornell's contributions to such areas as the green revolution in Asia, electrical engineering, and international politics – it is hard not to disagree.

But we also need to remember that Cornell is an institution that is also vital to our state, our region, and our home.

And that is why I would like to thank all of you for coming out tonight in support of our university and the Cornell Club.

And I encourage you to remain active in the Club – participating in events, inviting your Cornellian friends and colleagues to join you, and maybe even spearheading a programmatic idea or two. Because for as many ways that Cornellians continue to benefit the Buffalo area, I remain convinced that we have a lot more untapped potential among our 2000-alumni strong ranks. And frankly, I can't unlock our potential alone.

This brings me to the reason why we are here tonight – supporting future Cornellians who will

no doubt go on to make significant contributions to not only our region, but also our nation and our globe.

As we know, the cost of a Cornell education isn't cheap, but it is an overwhelmingly good value.

And it is a value that we have all benefited from – directly or indirectly -- largely thanks to the generosity of those who have had the foresight to endow professorships or award scholarships or provide programmatic funding so that future generations could have an even stronger education than the one they themselves benefited from.

So I do encourage you to consider making a gift to the Cornell Club of Greater Buffalo's scholarship this year.

Because in interacting with accepted students through the Alumni Ambassadors program over the last two years, I can't begin to tell you just how agonizing it is to learn of an incredibly intelligent and engaged accepted student – who having her heart set on Cornell – finds that she cannot attend due to the randomness of fate and her family finances.

But I also can't begin to tell you just how rewarding it is to read of students who are benefiting from our own generosity.

Consider the following passage taken from a letter by Rachel Kermis – an Amherst resident, scholarship recipient and member of the Class of 2012. While a high school student, Rachel was selected as a Western New York scholar athlete in both Field Hockey and Bowling. In high school, she also did cancer research at Roswell Park that

resulted in a publication of a paper that she wrote on head and neck cancer.

Rachel writes... “I applied to Cornell because I wanted to be a doctor since I was three. This desire to be a doctor has grown from my own personal experiences with medicine... Since I have been through so much myself, I feel that I would make a great doctor because I would know what my patients are going through.

“My major, Human Biology, Health, and Society was my dream major because it gives the entire perspective of being human. Seeing the entire picture is crucial to me because I believe that doctors should be well rounded so as to offer their patients the best care possible.”

Now, what I found striking in Rachel’s letter is that her quest to learn about the “entire picture” and to apply her knowledge pragmatically is indicative of a uniquely Cornellian-trait.

As you know, Cornell is famously an institution that has worked to educate **Any Person** – without barriers to race, sex, creed, or class -- in **Any Study** – agriculture to philosophy, hotel management to physics -- for the advancement of both our own selves and of humanity.

I think that’s an ideal that we can and should continue to support.

And so, without any further ado, I would like to pass the program over to Jay Brett who will be introducing our guest speaker for the night, a woman who -- by virtue of her year of birth -- herself benefited from Cornell’s commitment to access and openness.