Arts & Life

From ‘9 to 5’ to forever: Dolly Parton's lasting legacy

By KELSEY SWEET
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From records to literacy, a legend has finished her final shift, working to bring joy and kindness to millions around the world.

On Aug. 25, reported by her nephew Brayn Seaver through an emotional social media post on Instagram, Dolly Parton died at 80-years-old.

At 8:55 a.m., the morning after Parton’s death, some of her songs roared out of the speakers outside Quinnipiac University’s Echlin Center. The moment was unsettling; I felt goosebumps crawl down my spine and arms. I was fortunate to grow up in a house where all types of music were respected and praised.

I was always drawn to all types of music, from country to musical theatre. I knew Parton from a very young age, as she was often played through vinyl records and CD players at both my parents' and grandparents' houses. Now, 18 years later, I know the lasting impact Parton has made, and I am grateful to have been exposed to her music and her performances.

Ever since I started listening to music, I knew the artists who helped shape previous generations into what they are now. I understand the importance of appreciating the arts, and I hope one day I can be as inspiring as Parton. Her death marked a milestone, leaving behind a career that inspired individuals far beyond the music and television industry. A musical icon in her own right, penning over 3,000 songs and recording over 50 albums in her six-decade career.

Most are familiar with her heartfelt anthems. She inspired millions not only through her messages in her performances, but also through the way she cared for others and carried herself in the industry. Both Quinnipiac students and faculty have felt the loss. Some students grew up in environments where Parton was known for her famous hits.

First-year sports communications major Lily Wolf has found herself inspired by Parton.

“Dolly Parton has been such an inspiration for me. Her feminist lyrics in songs like “9 to 5” and “Just Because I’m a Woman” were formative to how I thought about myself and the patriarchy,” Wolf said. “Not to mention her advocacy work with her foundation the imagination library to foster a love of reading for young children. Even as a little girl, my mother would throw on Dolly songs and I’d sing and dance around the living room.”

Growing up poor in the mountains of Tennessee, one of 12 children, Parton knew hardship at a young age, much of which inspired her musical craft and dreams of making a difference.



ILLUSTRATION BY LILIANA MIRABELLA

“Don’t be so busy making a living that you forget to make a life,” she often reminded people. This quote, first posted Aug. 9, 2010 by Parton, appears in books, social media posts and other daily events.

Beyond perfecting her performance, Parton cared most about giving back to the community. Parton made a profound impact on the people through her timeless songwriting, inspiring self-authenticity and extraordinary hands-on philanthropy.

The elongated impact spans nearly seven decades of blood, sweat and tears. Driven by a staggering catalog of over 3,000 songs, her influence is built on a rare combination of creative genius, sharp business wit and universal love.

With one of her biggest advocacies being to support and encourage student literature, Parton donated over 27 million books to children.

Parton started her nonprofit organization, Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, in 1995, originally inspired by her father, Robert Lee Parton, who was unable to read and write.

“Her program spans five countries and gifts millions of free books each month to children around the world,” according to Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library.

The design was planned months in advance to commemorate the 31st Anniversary of Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library as part of the nationwide “Get Lost with Dolly” campaign, with the process supporting literacy and other educational programs.

Parton played a significant role in helping fund individuals' college education through targeted scholarship programs and employee tuition initiatives.

Parton covers 100% of college tuition, fees and book costs for all full-time, part-time and seasonal employees through her Dollywood Parks & Resorts employee program called GROW U.

The Dollywood Foundation started an initiative in 1988, the Buddy Program, that promised $500 to every seventh and eighth grader in her home Sevier County, Tennessee, if they successfully graduated from high school.

Others may recognize her from movies, “Steel Magnolias,” “Best Little Whorehouse in Texas” and more. In addition, younger generations may remember Parton from famous TikTok sounds or collaboration projects with other artists. Some of her major collaborations include Porter Wagoner, where they released 13 studio albums during her breakthrough years on “The Porter Wagoner Show,” including the famous song “Please Don’t Stop Loving Me.”

And luckily for all of us here at Quinnipiac, Connecticut is still holding onto a piece of Parton.

Local programs like the Middletown and Hartford clusters have already distributed a combined 230,000 books that stand as a living testament to her enduring commitment to early childhood literacy. Hosted in Brookfield, Connecticut, Twins BBQ Co’s maze will open for the fall season Sept. 5. It will hold a corn maze honoring Parton the first weekend of September. This event started three years ago (in 2024) as a way to expand their permanent outdoor venue on Federal Road into a seasonal family attraction

A small service was held only for families. In lieu of flowers, the family asks friends and family to donate to the signature childhood literacy organization via the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Donation Page.

From music to children’s books and musicals, Parton helped shape the industry into what it is now.

Dolly often said that her songs were her “ultimate legacy.” In the days following her passing, as millions reached for hits like “Jolene” and “I Will Always Love You,” the world proved her right. Dolly hung up her rhinestone, but her voice will sing forever.

A Quinnipiac student's guide to exploring the area

By SOPHIE MURRAY
Arts & Life Editor

Welcome back to Quinnipiac, Bobcats! Whether you’re stepping onto campus for the first time or you're returning for another year, there’s something exciting about the start of a new school year. The first few weeks back are filled with catching up with friends, meeting new people and adjusting to a new routine.

Quinnipiac does a great job of keeping students busy and entertained, from food trucks and Fall Fest to RecWell events and everything in between. Soon you’ll find yourself settling into your routine: going to class, making your daily Starbucks runs, library study sessions and getting your workout in.

But there’s more to the Quinnipiac experience than what’s just offered here on campus. With the semester just beginning, it’s a perfect time to get out, explore the surrounding area and make the most of your time before a busy schedule takes over. Whether you’re brand new to the area or just looking for an excuse to get out and switch up your usual routine, there’s plenty to do beyond the Quinnipiac bubble.

So, before the semester starts to get too busy, here is a Quinnipiac back-to-school bucket list:

One of my favorite activities to do in the fall is hiking Sleeping Giant State Park. With cooler temperatures and the leaves beginning to change, the fall is the perfect time to take advantage of the many trails right across campus.

Whether you’re looking for a casual stroll with friends to catch up or wanting to challenge yourself with a climb up the mountain, there are 40 miles of trails that will take you on a journey past cliffs, beautiful scenery and rivers. The trail I take most often leads to an observation tower, one of the most popular hiking destinations. The Tower Trail is around 1.6 miles and has a gentle slope, making it easy for beginners. The tower has a 360-degree view from the Giant’s highest point.

And what better way to treat yourself after a long hike than a coffee trip. One of Quinnipiac students’ favorite coffee locations is Ground Up Coffee. About a 10-minute drive from campus, they offer all sorts of coffees and pastries, including croissants, muffins and cookies. They also switch up their menu with monthly specialty drinks. This August, they offered a S’mores Cold Brew, Blueberry Cobbler Iced Latte and a Caramel Sea Salt Cold Brew.

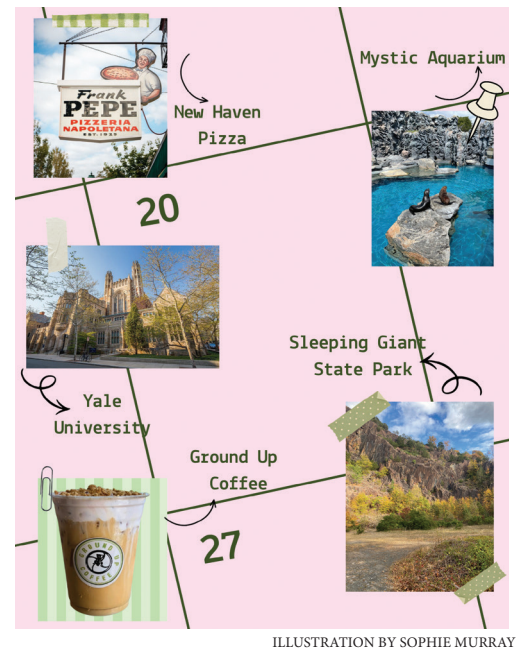

ILLUSTRATION BY SOPHIE MURRAY

It’s fair to say everyone needs a dining hall break here and there. Luckily, Connecticut is known for its diners, and there are plenty of options surrounding Quinnipiac for a nice meal that the dining hall may not quite be able to fulfill.

My personal favorite to head to for any meal of the day is Athena II Diner. My family and I have gone there multiple times either during move-in or before dropping me back off at school after a break. They have literally every item you could think of, from pancakes and waffles to sandwiches and wraps to burgers and Greek specialty food. And with larger portions, there is always some left over to bring back to campus.

If there’s one food you have to try while attending Quinnipiac, it’s New Haven pizza. Being such a short drive from the nation’s pizza capital means there is no excuse not to experience it for yourself.

New Haven pizza, or “apizza,” is known for its thin, chewy crust and signature charred edges. One of the most famous spots is Frank Pepe’s, which originated the distinctive New Haven style in 1925 after Frank Pepe, an Italian immigrant, opened his restaurant on Wooster Street. Being only about a 20-minute drive from campus, Frank Pepe’s is totally worth the trip to experience some of the world's most famous pizza.

One of the things I look forward to most on a weekend night is dinner with my friends. Sometimes you just need an excuse to dress up, eat good food and have fun with your friends.

Our favorite spot, Ixtapa Grille, is a Mexican restaurant about 10 minutes from campus and an easy Uber ride away. With delicious chips and salsa, quesadillas and enchiladas, plus a great atmosphere filled with other college students, it’s an easy choice for a night out with friends.

For something a little more laid-back, Eli's on Whitney is another great option. Also around a 10-minute drive from campus, Eli’s has a relaxed atmosphere, making it easy to sit down, order good food and spend a night chatting with friends. Every time I’ve gone with friends or family, we’ve ordered the nachos, which are my number one recommendation.

If you're looking for a sweet treat after a nice dinner, make a stop at Wentworth’s Homemade Ice Cream. Located around 12 minutes from campus, they offer tons of fun flavors, shakes and sundaes. It’s a perfect way to end a night, especially if you’re not quite ready to head back to campus.

If you have a free weekend, take a day to explore New Haven. Walk around the city and, of course, take plenty of pictures while the fall scenery is at its best.

You can also check out some of the city’s museums, including the Yale University Art Gallery, which offers free admission. It’s a great way to spend an afternoon without spending much money.

The best part about Quinnipiac is that there’s always something to do, but sometimes you have to leave campus to find it.