



Courtesy photo / John Blombach **Framework for Success**

## Discover your Inner Contractor

By John Blombach

Want to learn some marketable skills? Snatch up the tool apron. Grab a hammer, a square and a level. Let's build something and change somebody's life. Volunteerism is alive and well at Habitat for Humanity. Discover your inner contractor!

The college has a partnership with several community organizations to provide service learning experience for students. I've just completed a stint with Habitat for Humanity. It has been a life changing experience for me as well as those underprivileged families who will receive the benefit of the homes we are building.

Habitat has experience in home building. They have built over 300,000 homes around the globe in the last 30 years. They have developed more real estate than Donald Trump. Simple, decent, affordable housing is the most basic human requirement for life. Habitat and its sponsors offer alternative solutions to this ever growing need for basic shelter.

Habitat for Humanity builds houses around the world according to the same guiding principles: A world where everyone has a decent place to live. Habitat for Humanity is part of a global, nonprofit housing organization operated on Christian principles that seeks to put God's love into action by building homes, communities and hope.

Habitat for Humanity is dedicated to eliminating substandard housing locally and worldwide through constructing, rehabili-

tating and preserving homes. Advocating for fair and just housing policies; and by providing training and access to resources to help families improve their shelter conditions.

Habitat for Humanity was founded on the conviction that every man, woman and child should have a simple, durable place to live in dignity and safety, and that decent shelter in decent communities should be a matter of conscience and action for all.

Habitat for Humanity NCM offers a hand up, not a hand out to hard-working, low-income families seeking affordable homeownership. Simple, decent, affordable homes are built or rehabbed in partnership with families, donors and volunteers who share our vision of a world where everyone has a decent place to live.

What are habitat houses like? Simple, decent and affordable. Habitat houses are modestly sized. They are large enough for the homeowner family's needs, but small enough to keep construction and maintenance costs to a minimum.

According to Habitat.org, Habitat houses in the United States are typically built using wood frame construction and home designs reflect the local climate and culture. Efficient building methods and modest house sizes make the homes affordable. Habitat houses may have no more than 1,050 square

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## Ring in the New

By President Daniel M. Asquino

We ring in the new year at Mount Wachusett Community College not with the customary noisemakers of bells and horns, but with drills, hammers and saws as construction continues on our Gardner campus.

Your patience as you make your way to classrooms and offices during the modernization of our 45-year-old facility is greatly appreciated. In the coming months, renovations to our Advising Center, Commons Area, Theatre at the Mount, and main entrance will be unveiled, followed later this year by the opening of our new science and technology building.

Less obvious than these outwards signs of growth and im-

provement, but equally impressive, is the transformation taking place inside the classroom walls. New student support services, new faculty and staff, new transfer agreements, and new civic engagement initiatives will enhance our existing resources to help students build up their academic and career skills in preparation for the workforce or a bachelor's degree.

The semester ahead provides opportunities to help students build up their résumés as well as increase understanding on national issues, including race, income inequality, and citizenship. Continuing programs through the office of Student Life include alternative spring break with Habitat for Humanity, the Leadership for Life workshop series,

events commemorating Black History Month and Women's History Month.

The Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement

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**President Asquino**

## Resources for ESL Students

By Alexandra Rodriguez

Mount Wachusett Community College, a place where students from all over the world can learn and grow with the help of ESL Courses, Clubs and Student support services.

The Language Café, home for ESL students of MWCC has brought life to students from all over the world to interact and have fun, with the help of Jose Mangual, leader ambassador of Language Café and Professor Madhu Sharma who feels empathy for her ESL students. The Language Café, English as a Second Language club, offered for beginners in the English Language is a place for students all over the world practice conversational English at an informal setting. It takes place six to seven times per semester at noon in room 104 of the Leominster Campus.

Darrege Marie Dorval Bruny, a 23 year old Haitian lady, who is in the Intermediate level of the ESL Course at the Leominster Campus and has resided in Massachusetts for a year and 5 months, came to the Mount to study level two of the ESL course. She said that she has learned the most because they make you speak up and interact with each other.

The Language Café is a place where Bruny shares her ideas and opinions with other lady's

just like her. "You learn a lot about other countries and make friends," said Bruny.

In the other hand, Juliana Lucena, also an ESL student at the MWCC Leominster campus, came from Brazil and has resided in Clinton for over a year. She has a 1 years old son and she has come to the U.S with the purpose to learn English. Lucena sees herself speaking very clear and correct English. She explained that it is very different speaking street English and speaking correct English, using the right words and grammar, but thanks to Language Café, she will be able to do so.

Maduh Sharma, who's been teaching at the Mount for over 25 years, has a master's degree in Intercultural education and a Doctorate in Foreign Languages, expresses how her experience from learning languages and the professional preparation gives her an advantage for being a better teacher.

"I became more sensitive with students," expressed Sharma, with her own experience of learning Spanish as a foreign language when she lived in Mexico, preparing her to teach English as a second language to Spanish speaking students.

The most difficult part of teaching English as a second language according to Madhu, is patience! Very often, students

lack patience and teachers have to be very patient with them. Madhu expresses how students need to practice outside of class because the college is small and there are not many activities.

TRIO Student Support Services that assist students from first generation, low-income backgrounds, and students with disabilities to graduate and transfer, is a federally funded program, one of roughly 1,900 TRIO programs throughout the United States. TRIO programs grew out of our nation's commitment to the ideal of providing equal access to higher education to all Americans, regardless of their backgrounds or economic circumstances.

According to Director, Gaurav Khanna, the Visions Program at the Mount emphasizes how the TRIO program doesn't specifically focus on ESL students but works with students who are first generation, with limited income background and students with disabilities of any kind. According to Khanna, just by virtue of the population that

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## Discover your Inner Contractor Ring in the New

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feet of living space for a three bedroom home.

Habitat for Humanity is a community-funded organization — a community that includes our Habitat homebuyers. The work of Habitat for Humanity would not be possible without the unwavering support of our generous corporate sponsors, local business and volunteers. Most are the brands you know. Our corporate partners work hand-in-hand with us to pro-

vide decent, affordable shelter to families in need.

If you wish to make a difference but don't want to don the work boots, come work in the Re-Store or office.

Plan your Spring Break now; no experience necessary, on the job training. Learn all the ins and outs of building and rehabbing homes. Find your inner celebrity! Maybe you will be the next star on Reality TV's *Flip or Flop!*

## Resources for ESL Students

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they work with have an overlap of students who come with ESL backgrounds, and tend to be first generation students and occasionally limited income as well.

"So, while we don't have a specific focus on students from ESL background, those students are certainly eligible to be part of the program," stated Khanna.

According to Khanna there

are limitations for students from ESL backgrounds. Students are required to be U.S citizens, the program is limited to 420 students a year, and most of the ESL classes tend to take place primarily at the Leominster Campus, a campus that unfortunately is not covered by the program but offers service by the Gardner and Devens campus.

## Ring in the New

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is the go-to place for hands-on experience through internships, volunteerism and service learning. Among the center's upcoming offerings is a not-to-miss presentation on March 25 by Harvard political scientist and best-selling author Robert D. Putnam, through our involvement with the national "Citizenship Under Siege" program sponsored by the American Association of Colleges & Universities and The Democracy Commitment, and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

In February, the MWCC Humanities Project continues

its second year of programming with "Myths, Monsters, and Modern Science: Frankenstein's Legacy," an in-depth look at Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *Frankenstein*, and its relevance in today's world. Free events will take place on the Gardner campus and in the community at public libraries and other venues, funded through a grant from the NEH to deepen and sustain quality humanities programming and curriculum throughout North Central Massachusetts.

The Division of Access and Transition is launching a Tea Time Speaker Series that will kick off on February 29 with a Men of Color panel presentation exploring the journey and obstacles of men of color in so-

ciety, with an emphasis on professionals working in the field of healthcare.

With so much available in the months ahead, it's important to keep sight of the main goals and reasons you are pursuing a college education. If you encounter obstacles that seem insurmountable, I urge you to tap into the many resources that are available to you on campus, including free tutoring, counseling and advising, scholarships and mentoring.

We're here to help you succeed, and are glad you are with us during this exciting phase in Mount Wachusett's history, which in turn, becomes part of your own story of growth and development.

## Prison Rehabilitation and Education

### Should prison inmates get grants to pay for their education?

By Paul Crowley

Prisoners. Inmates. Convicts. The incarcerated. They break the law and we put them in jail to punish them and to deter other people from making the same mistake. We also seek to rehabilitate them.

We incarcerate 25% of the world's prisoners. One and a half million people were in state or federal jail in 2014. 93% of these people will return to our communities. We certainly punish them — especially since the get tough days of the 1990's. It is hard to measure a deterrence strategy, but since our prisons are swollen with inmates, maybe we do not deter enough. But why bother to spend the money to rehabilitate them?

If prisoners are released and get jobs, their chances to follow a lawful existence are high. If they are released and cannot find work — chances are they will return to a life of crime, re-arrest and imprisonment. It is in our best interest to improve the chance for employment of released convicts. But our local prison in Gardner is offering few if any education and training programs for its 1000 inmates.

Once ex-cons are re-arrested because they cannot effectively start a new life, the cost of justice begins to accumulate. Pre-trial lockup, trials, transportation, incarceration, health care, cost of appeals, etc. If an inmate can stay out of jail after release, those costs are not incurred. So rehabilitation can lower our future tax burden. In fact, a recent Rand Corporation study showed that if we spend one dollar on educating prisoners, it saves seven dollars in future justice costs.

If a released inmate chooses to not commit crime, then the community is safer. If they become better educated, their level of violence while in prison will be lower — improving safety for the prison staff.

An employed ex-convict pays taxes, builds a life, and contributes to the community.

But education takes money. It takes resources. Diverting money to convicts when law abiding citizens have needs is an idea that a politician would have difficulty championing. Felons lose their right to vote and since they cannot vote, they have no political power. That does not mean they are neglected, but it does mean that their ability to fight for their rights is compromised.

There are certainly some current convicts that will always peruse a life of crime by choice

or compulsion. But not all prisoners are so committed. Most of them are not 100% convicts. They have other parts of their lives such as being a parent, a son or daughter. They were teachers, carpenters, musicians, football heroes, veterans, etc. We classify them as convicts and make their rehabilitation almost impossible. They cannot get a driver's license for up to 5 years. Most employers are reluctant to hire convicts out of bias or fear, or because the released inmates have no current marketable skills.

According to the Rand study, rehabilitative studying and training, because it makes released prisoners more valuable, decreases recidivism (return to jail) by 13% of convicts released. That is a drop in future crime and justice cost that will positively impact the budgets of overstretched state prisons - saving millions. Proposals at the federal level to provide incentives for employers to hire released inmates can also help.

This reporter and Susan Tordella, director of End Mass Incarceration Together, [EMIT Web Site](#), a Unitarian Universalist volunteer task force to reform the Commonwealth's justice and correctional systems, met with State Senator Jennifer Flanagan to discuss education and other issues. The Senator is a strong advocate for mental health including inmates and wishes for a stronger participation by prisoners in mental health programs. She also believes that social issues and basic educational improvements are necessary to reverse crime. Senator Flanagan is strongly in favor of mandatory



Courtesy photo / flickr.com/Inmate\_Sasha\_#191275

**Pickens County offers GED opportunities for their inmates.**

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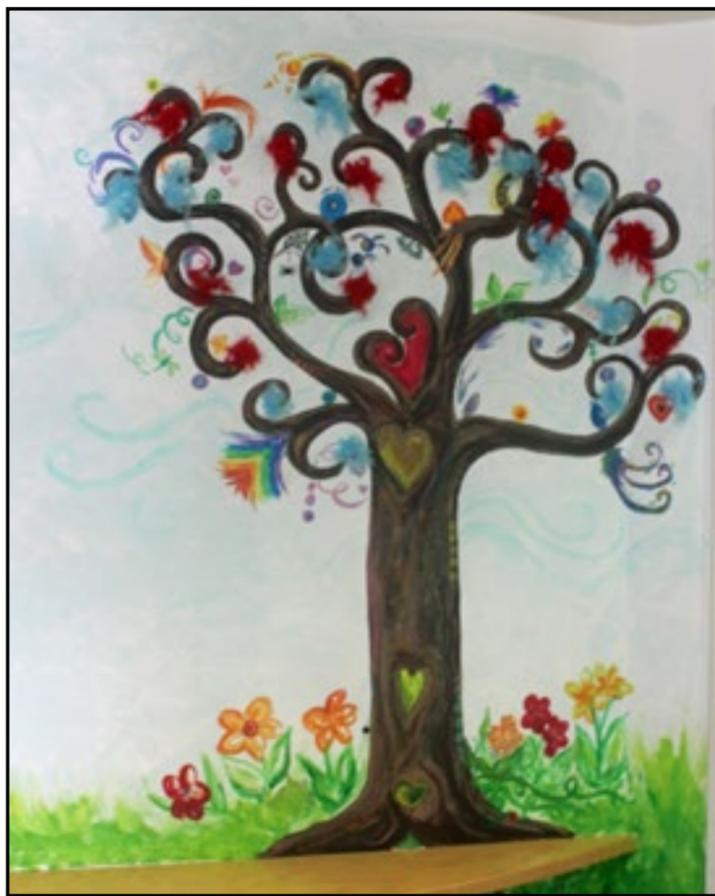
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*\*First issue is FREE; additional copies 50 cents*

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Courtesy photo / Yaritza Miranda **Mural done by Maureen Provost and staff.**

## The Garrison Center

By Yaritza Miranda

For those of you that don't know what the Garrison Center is, it's a preschool program for students and teachers to tend to their classes and do their labs for the Early Childcare Major.

Students are able to have their children attend the center while they attend class themselves at MWCC. The center is also open to the public. Children must be 2.9 – 5 years of age to attend.

Maureen Provost is an Associate Professor, and the Liaison at the Garrison Center. She has worked at the center for 10 years and has been at the college for 20 years. She has been an adjunct faculty member for her first 10 years at MWCC. She has an educational background of Bachelor of Arts, Elementary, and Early Childcare, Fine Arts at Trinity College in Burlington, VT and Master of Science in Ed-

ucation from University of New England in Biddeford, ME. She also taught in schools of South America and is bilingual. This inspired her to come to the U.S and teach here.

Provost works closely with students and teachers with observations and special educational events. This is where the Molly Bish Institute comes into play. The Molly Bish Institute has been put in place of the Stephen M. Brewer Conference Room in the Garrison Center, in support of the Molly Bish Institute for Child Health and Safety, the establishment of the Amber Alert, the official designation of the Missing Children's Day and by offering his consistent and enduring support for stronger sex offender laws in Massachusetts.

Molly Bish was a 16 year old girl who disappeared while

working as a lifeguard in Warren, MA back in 2000. Her body was found 3 years later after the largest search in the history of the state. The Murderer was never found. As for her parents, they visit the center to this day.

Provost is very supported of the Molly Bish Room. She said that it's the spirit of Molly that is felt in that room. A strong dedication that is being brought upon by Molly. She thinks that the safety and education of young children is very important and that's why she wants to be as much involved as possible. Maureen and the rest of the staff at the center do an Art Show for children to donate money for the Molly Bish Institute for Safety. They talk about safety for children and finger printing along with an art expo. This will be the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Art Show in April 2016.

## SGA at MWCC

By Andrew Hoenig

Gardner, Mass. - The Student Government Association (SGA) at the Mount is an elected group of students who represent the students' interests to the college's administration.

But in a recent survey done on campus regarding the general knowledge and impact of the SGA, a theme seemed to appear.

Many of the students answered these three words on at least one of three questions, "I don't know". In fact, 90% of the students who participated in the survey had little to no knowledge on what the SGA does for students and the school, what clubs it has organized on campus, and what impact it has on the students themselves directly.

The remaining 10% had a background of being, in some way shape, or form involved with the SGA.

What this survey did was show how much knowledge most students have about the SGA at MWCC.

These results come as no surprise to Carrie DeCosta, current president of the SGA at the Mount, since the start of the fall 2015 semester. In fact before taking office, she says she too had little knowledge of the SGA

and its impact in students' lives.

"Honestly, as the SGA president, I am not shocked that most students don't know what the SGA actually does for the student population. Before becoming involved myself, I was a little unsure of what SGA did, however, I knew a little bit," said DeCosta.

Cathy Teague who was the former president of the SGA from the Fall 2014 semester until the end of May 2015, also seems to echo DeCosta in her understanding of how much students actually know about the SGA and gave a reason as to why this may be.

"The students come to school, go to classes, and leave. There's not that sense of community," said Teague.

The overall impact of the SGA in student life on campus can be felt when any major issues or concerns come up.

"As SGA members and specifically me as president, I represent the voices of the student body," said DeCosta. "Any major issues or concerns can be brought to me and I can filter them up through the appropriate connections to see what we can do to get things resolved."

"We handle relations between the staff faculty and students, sort of like liaisons," said Teague.

DeCosta echoed her saying, "SGA is the voice for the student body population. A lot of students do not feel comfortable approaching a professor or the dean of students with an issue that they may have that has risen on campus. This where SGA comes into play. We are the liaisons between the students and faculty bringing any and all concerns to the meetings..."

"The SGA is bridging the communications gap," said Teague. Aside from being the intermediary between students and faculty, both Teague and DeCosta pointed out other purposes the SGA has.

"The SGA helps to plan campus activities. I realize that most of the students do not realize how big of an impact the SGA does have on the student body, however a lot of the planning and execution of campus activities, orientation and presence on campus is just a portion of what we do as SGA members," said DeCosta.

Another big thing that Teague mentioned the SGA does is the food drive for Thanksgiving, "It

helps students at Thanksgiving. We do it annually. It helps provide food to those with housing, food, and security needs."

Currently the SGA is also involved with many clubs/organizations on campus.

"I believe we have a total of 29 clubs and organizations on campus, and as a requirement for the clubs and organizations to receive allocated funds from SGA and the school, they are required to raise 30% of the allocated funds issued to them for the fiscal school year, as well as complete 2 community service projects," said DeCosta.

So with the results of the survey showing the students don't really know what the SGA is doing, how can the SGA get the word out more and get the students more involved and knowledgeable?

Teague says that, "Telling students of their personal experiences, spending time with them at the SGA booth, and talking with them at orientation," are just a few ways to get the students to understand and know just what it is the SGA does for them at their school.

DeCosta, being the current SGA president, also gave her

take on what she thinks can be done now to help better inform the students while she is in office, "As the student government president, it saddens me to know that most students have no idea what we do or that most students have no idea what we do or what clubs and organizations are available on campus to become involved. It is a proven statistic that students that are involved on campus generally have a higher GPA and a higher success rate throughout their college experience. One way that I feel this can be resolved is by having a greater presence of SGA members at the SGA Booth in the center highway heading towards the cafeteria every day of the week, including nights."

DeCosta made this final promise to better inform students of the SGA and its purpose; she wants students to know what it is the SGA is doing and why, and claims, "This is definitely my focus for next semester and hopefully our presence will be well known and students will have a better understanding of what we do to help the student body and population."

## Work for us!

The Observer is currently looking for reporters, poets, photographers, artists, graphic designers and critics. All interested should speak with the Editor in room 239 or email [mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu](mailto:mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu).

## Trump on Muslims

### Stop, Halt, Cease and Desist – An American Decision

By Andrew Hoenig

MWCC – Donald Trump is a current presidential candidate who does not mince words. His recent public outcries of halting Muslims from coming into America have been heard loud and clear by the general public.

A recent campaign press release says that “Trump is calling for a cease of all Muslims entering the U.S. until representatives can figure out what is going on.”

The recent activities of violence in the Eastern Hemisphere have some people wondering if maybe that is exactly what should be done. It seems now that one solution that has come forth from Trump’s comments is the possibility of having a religious test done to enter the U.S.

In a recent survey done on campus, students who participated seemed to agree. A majority responded with a similar response; that is that you don’t really know how these Muslims are going to behave, or what their attitude will be.

One current student enrolled in her second semester at the Mount, Makaylah Howard, specifically said, “There should be some kind of halt right now towards Muslims until we can get an identification process in place that is fool proof and that will actually be able to separate terrorists from non-terrorists.”

Now it’s certainly a hard subject to discuss as the students who participated pointed out. It’s like racism. You can’t discriminate against a whole group just because of the actions of one or a few.



Courtesy photo / **Donald Trump at the Worcester Rally, December 2015.**  
Cassandra Marino

But this has become such a pressing issue because a few have decided to take action in the form of killing. Terrorist attacks in the East have become more prevalent, taking place on larger stages like the most recent attacks in France and Germany.

Most have assumed that Muslims are the majority group of these terrorists and so because of this it makes the issue harder to debate and also even harder to find a solid conclusion about what to do.

Fear drives humanity to do things outside of the norm so that they may return to that norm or comfort state. However when fear conflicts with morality then the issue becomes murkier and a solution is unclear.

Howard also said, “It’s tough because there should be zero terrorists in our country right now. They are even faking passports.”

Placing a ban on Muslims could put a very sudden halt to terrorist activity in our U.S. borders, but there could be other consequences that come with it, like the potential rage of Muslims who are trying to get away from the terrorists themselves. It’s a big decision to stop everyone from coming in.

One can do nothing and allow Muslims and other immigrants to keep coming into the country running the potential risk of homegrown terrorist attacks. One can ban all Muslims but run the risk of potential outcry of unfair treatment and discrimination from the masses both outside and inside America.

In a recent statement made by Trump, he said, “Without looking at the various polling data, it is obvious to anybody the hatred is beyond comprehension. Where this hatred comes from and why we will have to determine.”

It’s fear and concern versus having an unclear conscience and lack of morality.

Points can be made for Trump’s call to action, but points can also be made against it. Conflicting reports say that Muslims are NOT responsible for most terrorist attacks while others say otherwise.

One thing is for sure though. The end result of how this crisis will be handled is clearly up to the American people. The next Presidential election is coming up in November of this year and America has to decide, in turn deciding how this current dilemma is going to be dealt with.

America is a democracy that has to make tough choices. These choices keep the country intact so that it can remain one of the world’s top leaders.

Once again America is faced with a tough choice on what to do next regarding Muslims. The answer is not clear cut and it may even come down to what people look at as being right from wrong. Stop... and think long and hard before deciding because the cease and desist of Muslim immigration into America is a decision that may not only alter how we look at Muslims, but also how they and others view us. Decisions, decisions.

## Voting Culture at MWCC

By: Stevie LaBelle

Does Mount Wachusett Community College breed an engaged atmosphere in regards to elections and informed voter – culture? The overall consensus is no, it does not.

“The upcoming presidential election is invisible,” commented Professor Reed Hillman, a Criminal Justice and Politics professor as well as former Representative for the House.

Only months away from the primaries for both Massachusetts and New Hampshire, and yet there is no signs that a presidential election is coming. Hillman believes that this is the most crucial time in the election period. He feels that if more people would get involved in this stage, before the candidates for each party are chosen, then it would breed better candidates for our country’s presidency.

If citizens were more involved in researching candidates and becoming thoroughly educated about stances on critical issues, rather than just what is viewed on commercials, and heard on radio ads, than they could be more confident in who they are voting for. “People follow the wave and are influenced by society,” stated Nathan Oakes, a Criminal Justice major at the Mount.

Mount Wachusett Community College does take steps to make becoming a registered voter more accessible for their students. The Student Government Association handles offering the forms to register to vote to students at the beginning of the school and concurrent to their own election time periods. However, the number of students who actually take advantage of this opportunity is fairly low. In the beginning of the fall semester, only 30-32 students registered to vote on the campus, according to the Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement. This Center is responsible for mailing out

the filled out registration cards. They do this in order to offset the cost to students.

Why is the campus so detached from elections? There is a “politics don’t affect me” mentality often times when students are unaware of just how much their own lives truly are affected by whom is the elected officials at the time.

In order to solve this issue, there has to be a way to push students to become more aware and more involved. Nathan Oakes has thoughts on how to accomplish this: a mandatory single day graded informative seminar. He feels this would be a concrete method to enlighten students about politics, how they could get involved, and why they should get involved.

Hillman has hopes that as January and February approach there will a rise in excitement levels for the upcoming election. He hopes if involvement does begin that it is balanced so that all sides are equally represented. He strongly believes “an educated voter is a better voter.” Hopefully, students will take it upon themselves to become more educated and take advantage of the resources present at Mount Wachusett Community College.

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## Transfer Information Session Dates

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Wednesday, May 11 5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

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## Prison Rehabilitation and Education >>>continued from page 2

minimum sentences.

There are several bills before the legislature that address education and safety. Senate bill S 64 and House bill H 1429 includes provisions to invest in education and job training for prisoners. Senate bill S 786 and House bill H 1620 are before the legislature to discuss repeal of mandatory minimums. Programs such as restorative justice (S 71 and H 1313) seek to engage offenders with victims, prosecutors and judges to re-examine the impact of their crimes.

What is MWCC doing? MWCC has just announced that they will be developing an education program with the Worcester County Jail.

Until 1994, MWCC had an

active educational program with the North Central Correctional Institute, the state prison in Gardner. The funding of the program was based on Pell grants. As prisoners have no income, they qualify for assistance. But during the 1990's get tough politicians were able to eliminate Pell grants for prisoners. Although they used 0.5% of the grant funds available, it was a popular "get tough" mindset that easily pulled this feature away from convicts. Over 500 educational programs in the country closed, leaving 14 programs running in the country.

Assuming a 5 year turnover of population and based on the Rand study's projections, over 500 fewer released convicts

would have returned to prison during those 20 years. There are ten state prisons. That would then mean 5000 fewer convicts, 5000 fewer crimes, and 5000 fewer trials.

But running a program is expensive. Several points were brought out during a discussion with Mellissa Sargent, Assistant Dean at MWCC. Ms. Sargent was the lead administrator during the prior program at MWCC.

There is administration needed at the local school and the prison. Teachers need to be recruited and trained. Assessment tests need to be applied. Computer access is limited or non-existent. Space, time and personnel have to be committed by the prison. Review of

materials, restrictions on types of materials (CD's, spiral bound books, etc. can be used as weapons), and other issues need to be managed. Additionally, the funding formula for community colleges suffers when students do not complete a program. If an inmate is transferred to another prison or is released and goes home without finishing the program, the school is penalized in the funding formula.

In July, President Obama promoted a pilot program for using Pell grants for prisoners. There are reform issues in front of the Massachusetts Legislature, and both liberal and conservative groups agree on the need for prison reform. States and cities are struggling with unmanage-

able prison populations. According to the Bureau of Justice Systems web site, "Eighteen states and the BOP [sic Bureau of Prisons] were operating at more than 100 percent of their maximum prison facility capacity at year end 2014, and seven states housed at least 20 percent of their prison population in privately operated facilities..."

However, little progress is being made. Until we begin to see ex-convicts as people rather than social pariahs they will continue to be disenfranchised politically and socially, suffering tremendous roadblocks to building a positive and productive life. Until we rehabilitate them more actively, they will continue to be a neglected class of citizens.



Courtesy photo / flickr.com/vvalentinaramirez

## Body Modifications vs Professionalism

By Chelsea Garrity

Body modifications, also known as body alterations, are prevalent among the students on the MWCC campus. This includes everything from nose piercings, gauged ears, and tattoos. College is a time where students get their sense of self and experiment with their natural rights of self expression. Yet college is also a time to develop your skills to eventually get a long time job. Will these experimental times limit us in achieving our future career goals? It all depends on the goal.

"It's all about knowing your target," says Patricia J. Brewerton, the Coordinator of Career Planning & Placement. From her experience, the students getting into the more artistic careers have more opportunity to self express. She still recommends that you go into the interview with nothing distracting on your face or neck. "You want them to be looking at you and listening to you. You don't need any flashy distractions that limit your opportunity." You can go in clean and polished and then evaluate the other employees to gauge what's acceptable for your own appearance. Brewerton adds, "And nobody is MAKING you do anything. If you don't want to take out your face jewelry, or cover up your tattoos, then don't. But you need to figure out if the

job is important to you and why. And if your self expression is really important, then you need to find a career that is accepting of that as well." She believes you should do what you want in this world even if that means you have to work 10 times harder to prove yourself.

FLEXcon in Spencer is a company that has production, lab, and office employees. Each area has its own expectations when it comes to dress and appearance. In FLEXcon's Corporate Policy under the Dress Code section, it states, "Employees in public facing positions should not have visible tattoos or piercings (other than conventional piercing on earlobes)." This is the only mention of body modification restrictions in the policy. In other words, if you are not working with the customers that come in, you have more freedom to have visible alterations.

However, all of the employees that were sampled stated that they were sure to cover up any tattoos and remove any facial jewelry during the interview process. "Once I was hired I kinda tested the pack. I evaluated what everybody else was wearing and doing. Then I decided it was safe to roll up my sleeves. But only in the office," stated a recent hire. "I know that the policy states earlobe jewelry only. But I have

multiple other ear jewelry and I work with customers. I don't see this as a problem and I am not taking them out," said Emily Allard, Marketing Assistant at the company. There are some gray areas about what's acceptable and what is not. It all depends on if your managers enforce the policy or not.

That is just corporate procedure; however, art careers seem to have more opportunity to express. "I have both sides of my nose pierced and had my ears gauged. I never had an issue when it comes to getting jobs or commissions. People almost expect this from art professionals. They want creative people. It is acceptable," explained Derek Taylor, current student of New Hampshire Institute of Art. He also has a job with the town of Acton, working in the summers as a landscaper. "The guys give me crap but I don't care. I still got hired and I am a hard worker. Nothing on my face can change that."

Body modifications, whether a trend or an ongoing experiment, are at the fore front of today's society. When it comes to getting a job you need to decide how important your alterations are and weigh that against how important getting/ accepting the position would be.



Courtesy photo / Flickr.com/Kelvey

## Prime Time for Presidential Primaries

By: Stevie LaBelle

As 2016 begins so does the energy leading into this year's Presidential Election. For Massachusetts residents the primary state election will be held on March 1, 2016. For New Hampshire residents the state primary is held on February 9, 2016.

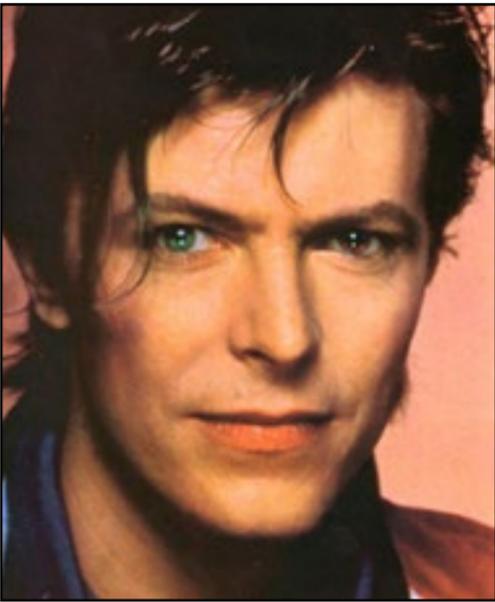
These primaries are coming up quick, and so are the deadlines for registering to vote or to change political party designations. In Massachusetts, residents must register or change their party designations by February 10, 2016 according to [www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/). In New Hampshire, residents are advised to register to vote 10 days prior to the election. However according to the New Hampshire state government webpage [www.nh.gov](http://www.nh.gov) those who are eligible to vote may do so on the day of the election.

In MA, residents may register at their city/ town hall, at local RMVs, or online at <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/OVR/>. Also, students at Mount Wachusett

Community College who are also Massachusetts citizens, may register to vote during SGA election times or by visiting the Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement in Room 152. The Center will mail out completed registration cards at no cost to the student. New Hampshire citizens may register to vote by visiting their local city/town hall.

The purpose of a presidential primary is for members of the distinct political parties to appoint the candidate who will represent their party on Election Day November 8, 2016. If a person is registered for a specific political party, then they may only vote for candidates of that designated party during the primary. If a person is registered as unenrolled, then they may choose to vote among any of the political parties. Presidential primaries are the first step in determining for future prospects for the position of President of the United States.

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Courtesy photo / flickr.com/asecugsm

## David Bowie Tribute

### The Stars Look Very Different Today

By Jason D. Greenough

Even as a lifelong bookworm, reading of the ins and outs of Rock n' Roll, when I hear that a Musician has died, it doesn't always hit me deeply. When Lemmy Killmister, legendary frontman of Motorhead, passed away just before New Years Eve, it didn't hit me the way it others because I am, admittedly, not a fan of Motorhead. When Natalie Cole, famed singer and Daughter of Jazz legend Nat King Cole, passed away on New Years Eve, it didn't hit me the way it may have hit others, because I am, admittedly, not a fan of Natalie Cole. I will admit, however, that I was crushed when I heard the news of Eagles founding father Glenn Frye's passing, because I was a *huge* Eagles fan.

But when I heard the news that David Bowie, the visionary rock star who penned such classics as "Space Oddity", "Changes" and "Under Pressure", had passed away on January 11<sup>th</sup> after a shocking revelation of a courageous 18-month battle with cancer, it hit me pretty hard. Even though, admittedly, I am not as well versed of a Bowie fan as many others are.

That's not saying that I wasn't a fan at all, though. For me, my affinity for Bowie went well beyond his musical genius, which spanned over 50 years. This entry is shared from the heart of a novice.

Bowie was the vanguard of a movement of outcasts and showed so many that being different was okay. With his glam and flamboyancy, he introduced to the world of Rock n' Roll excess a streak of real artistry, genuine ingenuity, and a heart for what he was creating. His music touched people and still does. His persona and stage presence influenced the glam rock sub-culture that brought bands like KISS and The Tubes into the spotlight. His stage shows brought showman-

ship and pizzazz to a whole new level, and while he changed with the times, he stayed more true to his craft than most, always putting the heart and soul before the dollar sign.

Starting with Ziggy Stardust in 1972, Bowie created alter-egos for himself that put him in the spotlight, and made it seem as if some guitar-wielding rock star had ascended from Jupiter to blow our minds with Sci-Fi themes, and raw power that was, with no pun intended, out of this world. That birthed the creativity of so many; to try and put a number on it would be an exercise in futility.

Even while secretly dying of liver cancer, he man found a way to record a full-length album, *Blackstar*, and tell us oh-so subtly "goodbye" through music videos for songs like "Lazarus" and the title track. Both highly recommended jams, both highly heart-wrenching once you realize the significance and the hidden message.

Many of us wouldn't have picked up an instrument, or screamed into a microphone, or even dressed the way we felt comfortable had it not been for Bowie's influence on pop culture. I'm still not as well-versed of a Bowie as I wish I was when he was alive, but from a new listener, I say thank you. Thank you, David, for your light, your smile, your voice, your passion, your power, and your heterochromia.

The stars indeed look different today, and it's because a new star is flying across the night sky in a tin can. Planet Earth is still blue, and there is nothing we can do, but carry on your legacy in us all, and spread love, art, and light.

Thank you, David.

## Pink Floyd's The Travel Sequence Track Review

By Patrick J. Miller

"On the Run" could be one of the more uninteresting pieces of the Pink Floyd album "The Dark Side of the Moon." Written by Roger Waters and David Gilmour, it is a composition that was created by entering an 8-note sequence into an EMS Synthi AKS synthesizer and speeding it up with a white noise generator creating the "hi-hat" sound effects. Originally recorded in January, 1973, the song feels more like an experimental piece than an actual finished song. While I get the meaning of this song intending to be representative of travel pressures, as well as the fear of death at any point, I just kind of don't get this song at all. At the very worst, it is just "there." The overall composition feels a bit underwhelming overall, even considering what its original genesis was one year earlier.

The Travel Sequence is the early version of "On the Run." As it was an earlier version of an eventually published song, The Travel Sequence was withdrawn for obvious reasons.

What I actually like about this track was that it was an instrumental jam consisting of a lead guitar [Gilmour], bass [Waters], keyboard [Richard Wright] and drums [Nick Mason] doing a perfect job in both playing together and separating to do their own jams/solos while still falling back together perfectly right before the song ends fading out to another. This is mostly true with live performances, with the Brighton 1972.05 performance being the only version so far to be officially released, also on the "Dark Side of the Moon Immersion Boxset."

With the Studio Version, recorded sometime before January 1973, it was a much tighter jam overall. Another major difference between this version and all live performances was that live versions tend to last around 4-5 minutes, just as frequently pushing past 6 minutes and even reaching 7 at rare occasions. The Studio Version lasts just 2 minutes, but it gets its point across in that short amount of time. The

tight jam represents a much more "frantic" form of travel, with no real indication as to which mode it is trying to represent.

Composition wise, every instrument is up front, with the lead guitar dominating slightly over the bass, with the keyboards right behind them. Oddly, from the beginning until the band decides to end the song, drummer Nick Mason decided to constantly use one of the cymbals while just slamming on the drums at a much more constrained, but constant beat, giving off the "frantic" urgency this recording has, and I really like it.

Overall, this outtake is good. It represents the part in the "Dark Side of the Moon" album about traveling nicely, but as history dictated, it would later be replaced by "On the Run." It is available as a Studio Outtake on the "Dark Side of the Moon Immersion Boxset" as well as the Brighton 1972.05 live recording, but other live recordings of this song have been confirmed to exist. [8/10]



Courtesy photo / Egoitz Moreno

## Tarantino Returns: The Hateful Eight Review

By: John Mossey

I'm going to start this review off by saying that *The Hateful Eight* is one of the best movies I had the pleasure of seeing in 2015. Quentin Tarantino, the mastermind behind this film, is one of Hollywood's underdog directors that deserves more credit than is given to him, and his eighth film, *The Hateful Eight*, is no exception compared to his earlier masterpieces, which include *Inglorious Bastards*, *Djan-*

*go Unchained*, and *Pulp Fiction* to name a few.

Starring an superior cast from the likes of Samuel L. Jackson (*Star Wars Episodes 1-3*, *The Avengers*), Kurt Russell (*Poseidon*, *Furious 7*), Jennifer Jason Leigh (*Weeds*, *Revenge*), and Channing Tatum (*Dear John*, *21 Jump Street*, *Magic Mike*), *The Hateful Eight* just glimmers from the performance of the actors and actresses in the film. Dialogue between characters is rich and enticing; unpredictable and alive. These characters seem like real people living back during the post-Civil War era, where the story takes place.

In the snowy hills of Wyoming, bounty hunters cross paths and find themselves in a strange predicament: a blizzard is coming quickly and the only shelter they can hole up in is an inn for travelers, merchants and the like. The inn is already occupied however, and now the bounty hunter John Ruth (Kurt Russell) must hold onto his \$10,000 bounty, Daisy Domergue (Jennifer Jason Leigh) for the next two days while in the company of another bounty hunter, a sheriff, a hangman, a confederate general, a cattle-herder, and a lone Mexican.

What I enjoyed most about this movie is how little action there was. This is a movie about characters and the power of dialogue. Throughout the movie, there are multiple instances where words deliver more power than any gun could. Don't get me wrong, there is action and

classic Tarantino brutality that is all too familiar, but not as much as you would find in *Kill Bill* or *Django Unchained*. Also worth mentioning is that the film was shot in a classic format using 70 mm cameras instead of the new digital format, now a standard for Hollywood. The movie looks easily as good as any digital movie (for instance, *Star Wars* or *The Hobbit Trilogy*) and personally, I hope more movies follow this classic format in the future (I'm not getting my hopes up, though).

Quentin Tarantino considers this film a snow-western. Now, as someone who does not particularly enjoy western movies at all, I have to confess that this movie really brought the genre back to the light. To be honest however, I'm not sure if I would classify this film as a western at all. Of course it is a western, but it feels like so much more. There is such depth to the characters and the world they live in, especially in post-Civil War era. Dialogue carries weight, the small and insignificant actions that characters perform while talking to one another makes them feel real and alive. This movie is a western and so be it, but it's the best damn western I've ever seen.

*The Hateful Eight* gets an easy 4.5 out of 5. Do yourselves a great pleasure and watch this movie. That is all that needs to be said. Watch this movie.

## Review: Bill Burr's *F is for Family*

By Jason D. Greenough

Who doesn't go on an occasional Netflix binge from time to time? Don't kid yourself, we just got back from almost a month off. You had to have watched *at least* a few days-worth of Netflix originals, and seasons of Network smash hits, which seem to accumulate like rabbits on streaming.

*Master of None*, *Peaky Blinders*, *Mad Men*, *Parks and Recreation*...the list goes on and on! But one show that stood out to me over holiday break was *F is for Family*, a Simpsons/Family Guy mash-up of sorts, created by Stand-up Comic and Massachusetts native Bill Burr.

The cartoon, which features buckets-full of "adult" humor, a few snippets of Burr's own stand-up routines, as well as what I surmise as exaggerated (or maybe not exaggerated) events that took place in Burr's own life as a kid growing up in the 70's never stops for one second to dry up. I mean, the youngest Boy, named Bill, is the only red-headed kid in the family, he's the wittiest of the kids,

and the most outspoken; all are qualities in some of the world's funniest comedians, including Burr. Again, I am only assuming that the Canton native felt the need to inject himself directly into the animation in some way or another.

The show is drenched in nostalgic 1970's feeling, music, sports fandom, with many references to how kids grew up in the era. And while Burr voices the father, Frank Murphy, a Korean war veteran, I would go as far to say as Bill is really the main character, as a lot of the story lines that take place throughout the first season's six episodes include the red head as a main cog. And in the arena of side-splitting laughs, Burr's outbursts as a disgruntled Dad really carry the show while the plots play out, almost flawlessly.

I loved the show deeply, and I look forward to a second season. A perfect 10 out of 10, if you ask me. I highly recommend it as well, but just a fair warning... don't attack me if it offends you. Happy viewing, fellow reader!

## Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens Review

By: John Mossey

I might receive some slack for this, but this movie was not all it was hyped up to be. Was it good? Absolutely. Easily one of the best Star Wars films ever. But why wasn't it great? Well, here's the thing: not even including the fact that this movie followed a very similar formula that *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope* had, this movie's storyline was dull and predictable. J.J. Abrams did an excellent job reviving the Star Wars series, but the story was his greatest (and only) fault.

Despite a boring storyline however, it was the characters and the Star Wars universe that helped this movie shine. Anyone fan of Star Wars will instantly feel at home with the familiar



Courtesy photo / flickr.com/David\_Eckelman

Introducing the new Star Wars villain, Kylo Ren.

droid sounds and starship noises; the foreign aliens and planets; a well done replica of the Mos Eisley Cantina and the returning designs of the X-Wings and Tie Fighters, both of which received slight upgrades and visual enhancements.

New and upcoming actors and actress Daisy Ridley, John Boyega, Oscar Isaac, and Adam Driver join the veterans of the series: Harrison Ford (Han Solo), Carrie Fisher (Leia Skywalker), Mark Hamill (Luke Skywalker), Peter Mayhew (Chewbacca), and Anthony Daniels (C-3PO). The classic character we know and love really shined on the big screen again, and what a true pleasure it was to see all their returns. However, there is a rea-

son for their return: the veterans are paving the way for the newcomers, showing them the ropes if you will, and are helping the audience get to know the new characters and to make them feel welcome. It was a brilliant idea on JJ Abrams part to include the old characters, but not to put a huge emphasis on them.

The movie is full of subtle references to the older movies, and takes steps to stand out from the other six. A new lightsaber design is introduced, and boy oh boy is that lightsaber mean and nasty. The new villain, Kylo Ren (Adam Driver), is the wielder of this fierce new weapon. The plasmatic sound of this lightsaber is easily as intimidating

*continued on page 8>>>*



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## Review: Tom Segura's Mostly Stories

By Jason D. Greenough

God, I love stand-up comedy. I drink it in like a sick kitty drinks from a plastic needle. Num, num, num.

...Okay, that was a little weird. I'm sorry. Let's continue...This never happened.

Where was I? Oh yeah! I love stand-up comedy!

My comedic taste ranges from George Carlin and his political and cultural observations to Dane Cook and his stock room full of d\*\*k jokes. One comic that I have come to especially enjoy as of late though is Tom Segura, who just released his second Netflix-produced stand-up special, and it is absolute gold!

Segura touches on a lot of crazy, yet common, everyday things. I would hate to spoil it for you, so watch it if it seems in-

teresting to you. Or don't, it doesn't matter to me. Maybe you don't like funny. Ya' know, some people don't like cake. But I do, and you better believe that I will tell you how good I think this cake is. In other words, whether you like it or not, fellow reader, I will share my thoughts on this comedy special. Rather, every day observations and thoughts, jammed into over an hour material that will leave you needing to pause it to regain your breath. Well, I had to at least.

His demeanor is that of someone who has conquered the world with his jokes, having the crowd wrapped around his finger the whole time. But at the same time, he has the demeanor of someone who just doesn't want to be there, remaining monotone for almost the whole set, only raising his voice a handful of times to reach high exaggerations. Segura does this in a way that is dry, but at the same time, intriguing, and I think that is what makes him so unique. Sure, his quiet, grumbly voice channels a retro Steven Wright persona, but these jokes, these wonderfully sculpted musings, which are mostly stories of his daily life, given the title, are refreshing in a way. That way being that it isn't Kevin Hart, who seems to be in *EVERY THING* lately, or some bland toilet humor that has been shouted through a microphone incoherently. Well, there is toilet humor. But it's awesome toilet humor.

So, I give this a 10 of 10, and strongly suggest that you check it out if comedy brings you out of the dumps like it does me! Cheers!

## Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens Review >>>continued from page 7

as the fresh design. Also included is a new class of Stormtrooper; a Stormtrooper who wields a melee weapon that can deflect the attacks of a lightsaber. Watching one of these new Stormtroopers was quite engaging as no Star Wars fan has ever seen a Stormtrooper go up against a lightsaber with such determination and ferocity.

My favorite portion of the movie was the intense lightsaber duel towards the finale of the film. I won't say names to prevent spoilers, but this lightsaber duel is easily the most brutal duel in all of Star Wars movies. Where it lacked the emotion between the two duelists, it added brutality in the wounds inflicted and the force powers used. The sounds of the lightsaber clashing was a classic and comfortable sound that any fan would be proud of. I'm glad they decided to include blood in this movie because in all actuality, lightsabers are going to draw blood when a wound is inflicted.

One aspect of this movie that I particularly enjoyed was the comic relief spewed throughout the movie. Not only was it fresh and actually funny, but a lot of the humor

and jokes being made were concerning references only Star Wars fans could appreciate and enjoy and this helped build a comradery in the theater. And on the subject of the theater atmosphere, it was easily the best atmosphere I've been in for a movie before. Everyone was excited and thrilled and when STAR WARS came up on the black screen with the classic John Williams theme, the whole theater was clapping and cheering and I simply couldn't help but join in. Star Wars is back, and despite some flaws, it's better than ever.

It's not the best movie of 2015, but it is still a damn good movie that any Star Wars fan can appreciate. I was afraid that Disney would soften the movie up since acquiring the rights, but am happy to say that this is not the case. Though there are lots of comic relief portions, there are some dark and brutal elements too and the addition of blood was a welcome addition. All in all, Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens gets a 4 out of 5.

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