

The Mount Observer

“Voices of the students of Mount Wachusett Community College”

Tree Removal Shines a New Light on Parking

by Christine Nelson
OBSERVER CORRESPONDENT

Alan Cumming is a force behind much of the landscape events and changes to our 296 acres that make up the Gardner campus.

Cumming initiated the idea of removing trees from behind the daycare to solve a variety of problems. The area was attracting a number of different animals, including an “eight-foot long rat snake,” Cumming said. The school was interested in adding light, as well as access to the back of the building. Eliminating some trees also offers added safety, as the police can now see into that area.

“The trees also shaded the C parking lot, making it icy in the cold weather,” Cumming added. Someday he sees the potential for the space to be used by students.

When Cumming was first hired, almost six years ago, he saw opportunity for change. The student entrance to the building had heavy dated plantings of yews and rhododendrons.

“We had lots of rocks from the installation of the wind turbines,” described Cumming. “I piled up rocks for some height, then added perennials in between. The resulting plan is low cost, low maintenance, has low water requirements, with different



Photo by Brianna Stevens

Clearing behind the Garrison Center began early in the semester, and continues as Summer arrives.

colors and textures.” Cumming works with two other team members; the three are in charge of all landscaping, snow removal, general exterior responsibilities, and campus preparation for functions such as graduation.

This UMASS Amherst, Stockbridge School of Agriculture graduate has had a variety of agriculture and landscape related jobs, including his own farm. For students interested in agriculture related

work, Cumming recommends, “Start small and find your own niche. It is a lot of hard work, but it can also be rewarding.”

Despite his numerous responsibilities at the Mount, he sees opportunity for new ideas and

change. For example, Cumming noted that our campus consists mostly of large pines. He sees the potential for adding smaller trees for diversity. A dwarf fruit orchard on campus could add beauty and be used as a teaching space for horticulture classes. “A school is a good place for experimentation,” Cumming said.

Perhaps Cumming’s biggest challenge is the weather. “We have long winters and it could be snowing here when it is not snowing elsewhere.”

He has some advice for gardeners too. In the interest of making outdoor spaces more sustainable, Cumming finds alternatives to mulch, which uses up trees, energy, money, and is labor intensive to spread. Instead he prefers to use stone. “Laying a landscape fabric first and then spreading stones on top, from pea stone up to 1.5” in size, has worked fairly well,” Cumming said. He also uses non-invasive ground covers with low water requirements to replace the mulch, such as sedum.

“I really like my work. I have met a lot of nice people, students, faculty, and coworkers. And I like the opportunity to create different kinds of landscapes,” Cumming said.

Behind the Scenes of Graduation The Best of Times and Worst of Times

by Michele Walsky
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Congratulations graduates! May 16th is looming near and while the “Pomp and Circumstance” march silhouettes your success, none of this would be possible without the smooth orchestration of the college staff. Yet, even flawless plans go awry.

From academic advisors, alumni and Dean Jason Zelesky, the choreographing A to Z’s involve everyone in between. According to Assistant Dean of Students Greg Clement, it starts with the procession of paperwork in the records office. From there grades are finalized by faculty, and about 100 volunteers collect tickets, control crowds, guide guests, help groom graduates and arrange the reception.

“It takes a village,” Clement said. “The whole college is involved. Administration assistant Sarah Savoy orders the caps and gowns and helps dress the graduates. The media service sets



Photo courtesy of MWCC

Previous graduates show their enthusiasm for the commencement ceremony.

up live streaming. Marketing gets information out for press releases. Dean Zelesky’s committee sets up tents, chairs and portapotties. They make sure there are enough parking spaces and guests in tents have enough water.”

Clement gave kudos to maintenance for “making the

campus look terrific.” He also credited dining services for setting up a tasty spread and Academic Affairs for ordering the music. “We have a mini orchestra and there are bagpipers who lead the graduates in,” he said.

Graduation rehearsal the day before helps ensure perfection.

“Counting is very important,” Clement stressed. Because gowns billow, he said it is hard to judge how many graduates are in a line, so ushers have to count each student into rows.

“There’s always a student running extremely late so we leave extra room to sneak a graduate in,”

Clement said. “It’s inevitable. A car breaks down, things happen.”

He also recalled a graduation gaffe from four years ago.

“Commencement starts at 6 o’clock on the dot,” Clement recalled. “Former President Asquino was a stickler for starting on time. Doors opened at 5 p.m. Reserve seating, VIP seating and bleachers were full.”

At one minute to six, Clement was about to lead the graduates in when the fire alarm went off. Students, staff and 1500 plus guests had to evacuate the gym for about seven minutes due to a small dust fire on the roof, he said.

While congregating outside, the committee told the guests to remember where they were sitting. With such a crowd, Clement was doubtful and he envisioned a time-consuming catastrophe filing back in.

“But it was a commencement miracle!” he said. “Everyone remembered and the ceremony

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“Graduation”>>>

Graduation

>>> *continued from page 1*

re-started within fifteen minutes.”

It isn't possible to name every nuance in the labyrinth of labor but without all hands involved, success wouldn't exist. In order to get that degree in *your* hand a “Petition to Graduate” must be submitted.

This brief form is found on the college's website or in the records office. This is where Rebecca Forest, Assistant Dean of Records and Institutional Research, comes into the picture. She perpetually provides Marketing with the names of graduating students to add to the program pamphlet. She works with Joyce Maynard who does a final sweep on Degree Works to make sure credits are met and then Forest initiates communication with students who have not yet petitioned.

Besides the bog of paperwork, Forest is hands-on during graduation with fists full of safety and bobby pins, helping graduates affix regalia and mortarboards. She said there is an instructional video under the Graduation tab on the iConnect website to help at home.

“The hoods are the most difficult,” Forest said. “It hooks into a button and

comes to a point in the back.”

Forest also assists in lining 300 to 350 students two by two into stanchions categorized by major.

“It gets crazy,” she laughed. “I'm herding cats.”

But the process is not too crazy because the college has it down to a science.

As students line up to receive their diplomas, Forest makes sure they have their name cards ready, which they pick up in the graduates' tent. She keeps extra pens and index cards in her pocket just in case any are left behind.

“Students have their official names printed on the degree, which is picked up a week later,” Forest said. “But they can write the name they're known by on the card.” For challenging names, Forest suggested students write the phonetic spelling underneath to help the Vice President pronounce them correctly.

All these preparations converge to create a magical evening.

“It's a beautiful ceremony,” Clement said. “It honors the graduates and really, it's symbolic to all the different journeys. Everyone has their own success story and it's great to see their accomplishments.”

Graduation at a Glance

- Graduation rehearsal is May 15th at 6 p.m.
- Commencement is May 16th at 6 p.m. in the fitness center gym.
- Graduates need to arrive by 5 p.m.
- Four tickets are issued per graduate for gym seating.
- The overflow tent does not require tickets.
- This year's guest speaker is Governor Charlie Baker.

An Empty Place at the Table



Photo by Alexa Nogueira

A table set to honor 22 victims of domestic violence.

by Alexa Nogueira

OBSERVER CORRESPONDENT

YWCA (formerly “Young Women's Christian Association”) Domestic Violence Services arranged a display on April 2 to serve as a remembrance of those who have been victims of domestic violence.

The display remained up for the remainder of the week and can be found in the Arthur F. Haley Academic Center.

According to the YWCA, domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women. But for every story we hear about the victims of domestic violence, there is a seat left empty at the dinner table that no one talks about. This display is a tribute to those who have lost their lives to domestic violence within the past year in

Massachusetts and shows seats at the table that have been left behind.

An Empty Place at the Table began in October 1993 at the Lackawanna County courthouse. It was started by Peg Ruddy, director of the Women's Resource Center, and Jane Kopas, a volunteer, who both wanted to memorialize victims of domestic violence after the deaths of Phyllis Mashie, Cindy Marshalek, and Sheena Marie Jones. Ruddy and Kopas were inspired to create An Empty Place at the Table by *The Dinner Party*, an artwork by Judy Chicago which represents women neglected in history, *The Quilt Project*, which memorializes victims of AIDS, and *A Place at the Table* by Edith Konecky, which examines

mental illness. The image of the Table symbolizes the experience that is shared among victims of domestic violence, regardless of their age, race, or ethnicity.

Each victim of domestic violence had their place at the table and in society, which is now left empty. An Empty Place at the Table serves as the visual which shows how domestic violence homicides change the family table and the community as a whole.

Beside the display the YWCA also has a stand with information cards and bookmarks that visitors can take with them.

Visitors of the display can also give anonymous feedback by filling out one of the forms on the stand and depositing it into the purple box.



Photo by Alexa Nogueira

Sonia Rios' place at the table.

There are 22 empty places at the table, each set to honor the following victims:

Corrina Santiago, 42, of Fitchburg
Sonia Rios, 42, of Leominster
David Carlson, 54, of Worcester
Leah Penny, 31, of Malden
Nicole White, 44, of Lowell
Celeste Kordana, 39, of Pittsfield
Joseph Shaw, 44, of Brockton
Scott Benoit, 52, of Brockton
Collin Edwards, 37, of Roxbury
Eugenia Gomes Monteiro,
 30, of Brockton
Amanda Glover, 48, of Wendell

Maria Morton, 32, of Lawrence
Delilah Santiago, 18, of Holyoke
Joanne Ringer, 39, of Clarksburg
Mary “Molly” Fratantonio, 35, of Cotuit
Kristina Reis, 36, of Fall River
Aracelys Valdez Deleon, 40, of Lowell
Juan Roman, 45, of New Bedford
Michele Clarke, 33, of Weymouth
Vanessa MacCormack, 30, of Revere
Anthony “Tony” Scaccia, 6, of Foxboro
Brenda Hatheway, 43, of Webster



The YWCA offers 24 hour help through their helpline and online chat. You can reach them at any time by calling 1-508-755-9030, or through their website, ywcahelp.com.



The Moral of a Mural:

The Art Club Spins Optimism Through Painting



Photos by Brianna Stevens

The completed mural as it sits in the hallway (left); The in-progress Art Club mural as it was at the beginning of the semester (Right).

by Elizabeth Jones
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Sending a message through art in a year that seemed dominated by tragedy, a mural outside the advising office was created by four members of the art club. The team began working in January and after an estimated 130 hours, the mural was completed in March. “It is a tribute to all the tragedies of 2017,” said Allyson Bois, Art Club President. She was joined

by the Art Club Vice President Camilo Alamares; Treasurer Blake Denmark; and Nicholas Lutz. For the participating artists, not only was the mural a tribute to those who suffered, but it was also a way to connect with each other in the wake of so much negativity. “It helped lighten the mood,” said Lutz. “It felt like a way to bring people together.” After completing the

mural, Bois said, “I felt success, excitement, and gratitude.” The idea to do a mural was suggested by Professor Thomas Matsuda, Chair of the Art Department. The team immediately started brainstorming ideas for the mural. Alamares was the one who came up with the final design after a collaborative process, taking varying ideas into consideration.

He found a way to incorporate many of the suggestions into one cohesive image. Alamares then brought the idea and design to President Vander Hooven, who was very supportive. “The President was on board from the moment we brought it up,” said Alamares. This is not the first time the Art Club has done a community project like this. This past summer

they were part of a “Beautify the Town” project, where they painted electrical boxes as well as a mural for the Gardner Ale House. When asked if they would like to do any other murals for the school, Bois spoke of two projects they are already considering: a mural for outside of the Veteran’s Center and another for the library with a theme of education.

Come Work for Us!

Interested in becoming a member of the *Mount Observer* team?
Contact us at mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu.

Work Study positions are available to those who qualify! See Scott Farris in Admissions for details.

Poet Stuns Audience with Personal Anecdotes

by Zach Pavlosky
OBSERVER CORRESPONDENT

Esteemed poet, essayist, and editor, Martin Espada, mused a packed audience with tales of racism, change, and baseball during a poetry reading in April, held in the North Cafeteria on the Gardner campus.

The poetry reading was sponsored by the MWCC Humanities Project, which is funded by a Challenge Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

Espada opened with one of his better-known poems, “The Trouble Ball,” from his poetry book of the same name. “The Trouble Ball” is about Espada’s father, Frank, whom the poem is also dedicated to. In it, Espada speaks of lack of inclusion and his parents being a mixed-race couple.

Espada recites his poetry in a manner that I have never witnessed in person. Typically, when someone is reading a poem that is not their own, they will speak in a voice that they think accurately fits the narrative of the poem.

Espada, on the other hand, puts his entire body, as well as his voice, into the poem which results

in more of a performance than a simple reading. He’ll speak in a high pitch tone when imitating his mother or a childhood acquaintance, and a low, booming voice when channeling his father.

The unique way in which Espada structures his poems is what separates him from other poets. Having read a small

“Espada takes powerlessness and poverty, and crafts them into emotional and politically charged stories.”

handful of Espada’s work, I’ve noticed that he doesn’t use many of the conventional poetic devices normally found in poetry- rhyme, beat, alliteration- to name a few. To me, Espada’s poems are more like stories than they are poems. In fact, Espada recalls days on the cleaning crew at Sears in “My Heart Kicked Like a Mouse in a Paper Bag.”

“I was a wanderer,” Espada said, referring to the many low-level jobs he has worked. Much of Espada’s work celebrates, as well as laments, the experiences of the immigrant working class. He narrates the struggles of Puerto Ricans who must adjust to life in the U.S. Espada takes powerlessness and poverty, and crafts them into emotional and politically charged stories.

Espada ended the reading the same way he began- with a poem/story about his father. “Letter to My Father,” a new poem from Espada, is about his father’s hometown of Utuado, Puerto Rico and the devastating hurricanes that have been ravaging it. Espada spoke of his love for his father and his disdain towards the U.S. government for not doing more to help the citizens of Puerto Rico. At the very end of the poem Espada makes a promise to his father that he will scatter his ashes from atop the mountains of Utuado.

Espada prefaced the reading of “Letter to My Father” by addressing to the audience, “I wasn’t sure what to do with my father’s ashes. Maybe now I am.”



Image from Flickr, by Steve Johnson

Some poets use word magnets in exercises to better stimulate ideas.

Open Letter: The School That Changed My Life

by Brianna Stevens
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Dear Mount Wachusett Community College,

When I first applied here, you were my safety school. I never expected to actually attend, but halfway through the summer, my plans with another institution fell through because it was going to cost so much money, money that I did not have.

I turned to you because you were my safety net, thank God. Without you, I would either be \$50,000 in debt by this point in my education, or I would be working full time at a job I hated.

The Mount had always been such a warm and welcoming place. From the day I walked through the front doors to take my placement tests, to the day I walked out with my AA. Every interaction I have with students and faculty puts a smile on my face that is as genuine as it gets.

I’d like to give special thanks to the professors and faculty that have left a mark on me during my time here.

Professor Sue Blake always smiles and tells me hello when I see her in the hallway, she wrote me recommendations for scholarship awards, of which I received two.

I got to know her during the fall of 2017 in Modern Drama and through completing an honors program component for the class.

Professor Tom Montagno,



Photo by Sarah Williams

Outgoing Editor in Chief Brianna Stevens (Right) shares her enthusiasm with Todd Bennett (Left)

whom I had for Biology 109, who opened up my mind to ideas that I hadn’t considered.

That class is what made me firmly decide to major in Biology when I transfer, and what made me apply to WPI for Biomedical Engineering.

Professor Sheila Murphy, who

has always been in my corner and rooting for me. Her words of encouragement always reassured me, even just as simple as writing at the top of one of my weaker homework assignments “Your class average is a 96.5 still :)”

Professor Sue Goldstein, my mentor and advisor of The

Mount Observer. Hers was the first face I saw in a class at The Mount, English 101 at eight in the morning. I still remember her invitation to take Journalism at the end of my first semester, and I will never regret taking that class.

The Mount Observer had sharpened my writing skills, taught me basic graphic design skills, opened the door for

“I started near, and MWCC has given me the confidence and knowledge to go as far as I can imagine.”

leadership positions in the future and taught me how to be a good leader. None of this would have happened if I hadn’t chose Sue’s English 101 class on a whim.

Todd Bennett, transfer counselor extraordinaire for TRiO’s Visions and RX programs. Todd was also one of the first people I met at MWCC, and he helped me correct my FAFSA application before classes began in the Fall of 2016. He sat down with my mother and I and talked us through the process, because God knows

my mother and I were clueless about this stuff (Neither of my parents completed college and I am a first generation student).

Todd and Visions kept me afloat and guided me through my first years of college.

Every professor I had during my time here changed me, and it was more than just the classes, it was the people themselves that made each class so impactful.

Every professor cares so deeply for their students and want to see them succeed and flourish, and that is an experience that separates MWCC for other community colleges.

The simplest of encounters here have pushed me forward and encouraged me to not give up. MWCC is such a special place to go.

Some of those encounters are simply someone holding the door open for you, or letting you pull out of the parking lot when construction is making everything confusing.

Everyone is filled with kindness and genuinely care about one another and wants to see everyone succeed.

Thanks to you, MWCC, I now have my Associate’s degree in Liberal Arts and Sciences and will go on to major in biology, and someday I plan on saving the world.

I started near, and MWCC has given me the confidence and knowledge to go as far as I can imagine.

The Strangers: Prey at Night Review

by Jennafer Gonsalves
OBSERVER CORRESPONDENT

The Strangers: Prey at Night, while flawed, stays true to the bone-chilling concept of the original while also having quite a bit more fun.

In the year 2008, horror movies were popular, particularly those that contained a lot of blood, guts and mutilation. With franchises like *Saw* and *Hostel* going strong, as well as classic slashers such as *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, *Friday the 13th*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, and *Halloween* being remade for more modern audiences, a movie like *The Strangers* seemed like it would go largely unnoticed, lost in the midst of more and more of the same.

Yet *The Strangers*, directed by Bryan Bertino and starring Liv Tyler, went in a different direction than what was popular at the time – the film didn't show much in the way of gore, and instead relied on fear of the unknown to build up an unsettling atmosphere.

The real terror was in the *concept* of the movie, rather than anything explicitly shown on screen – true horror is often completely random and can happen to anyone without reason. The ever-familiar horror movie question, “Why are you doing this?” is answered not with a tragic backstory or an evil villain speech, but rather with a simple, nonchalant “because you were home,” which is perhaps just as chilling, if not more so.

Opinion on the film seemed to be split right down the middle, with the nay-sayers claiming it



Image from Wikimedia Commons, by BRFZ1

The Strangers: Prey at Night, directed by Johannes Roberts

to be boring, or unsatisfying.

Seemingly the horror franchises that are successful these days tend to lean more in the supernatural direction, such as *The Conjuring* and *Insidious*.

Yet, the remake to *The Strangers* released in March of 2018, under the title *The Strangers: Prey at Night*.

Prey at Night, directed by Johannes Roberts, follows a family of four – parents Mike and Cindy, and their teenaged children Kinsey and Luke – as they take a family trip to their Uncle's (conveniently otherwise empty) trailer park.

Tension runs high, with the rebellious Kinsey angry and upset with the fact that she's being sent to boarding school, Luke wishing he were home with friends, and both parents doing all they can to smooth things over. Things only plummet downhill from

there, when Uncle Marvin's corpse is discovered in another trailer, and the family begins to realize that they aren't alone.

This movie doesn't take itself completely seriously, which works mostly in its favor – horror clichés (for example, the loss of cellphones and cutting of all landlines) are bound to show up in a movie of this nature, but with a slight tongue-in-cheek nature, it comes off as notably less tiresome when protagonists make overly hashed out stupid horror movie decisions.

In comparison to the original film, which took place in a single house, *Prey at Night* is a lot more visually interesting as it contains mostly outdoor scenes with the eerie background of the deserted trailer park to add to the tension.

It's also more fast-paced – ironically, it's exactly the movie I would have wanted

to see as a kid, with on-screen killing, quite a bit of gore, and even a few tense car chases.

The cinematography is pretty standard for a slasher movie shot almost exclusively at night, but there are some absolutely beautiful shots nonetheless. There's a particular altercation scene that takes place in a pool, flanked by palm trees all lit up with neon Christmas lights as upbeat 80s pop plays over the speakers. Juxtaposed with the dark clouds of blood in the water and the tension between protagonist and antagonist, it really makes the scene pack a punch.

The homages add a little something extra for horror fans – despite being clearly intended to be watchable as a standalone, there are quite a few well-placed throwbacks to the original, including the chilling exchange (although this time

the answer is “why not?” rather than “because you were home,” but the effect is the same).

There's also a scene towards the end involving someone jumping into the bed of a truck and then getting chased on foot that's an obvious shout-out to Tobe Hooper's original 1974 *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

This movie does fall flat in places, one being its characters. Slasher movies aren't usually known for the likability of the protagonists, but in a film like this where the audience is clearly supposed to empathize with its main characters, some development is necessary past just the surface level.

And then there are the jump-scares. Jump-scares are a cheap way of dragging fear out of an audience, and the use of them just shows laziness. Any movie could make you jump by utilizing absolute silence followed by a loud sound.

It's frustrating as a viewer because *Prey at Night* is not otherwise incompetent with regards to being frightening – there are quite a few terrifying scenes in this movie, and it sells itself short by falling back on such a lazy method.

The Strangers: Prey at Night is far from perfect, but for what it is, it does a pretty good job. It's fun, it's entertaining, and its concept still delivers that punch to the gut that was there in the 2008 film. Those qualities, in my opinion, make for a decent horror film.

Feel as if you started here.

Springfield College is a welcoming community. Transfer students quickly become involved in academic and campus life and come to be active members and leaders in community service programs, academic and student organizations, athletics, club sports, and more.

It's like you've been here all along.

Want to know more? Contact Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admissions/Transfer Coordinator Kate Stano, EdD, G'04, at (413) 748-3136 or kstano@springfield.edu.

Office of Undergraduate Admissions
263 Alden Street, Springfield, MA 01109
springfield.edu/transferad

SPRINGFIELD
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Photo by Benjamin Richard, Caption by Ayana Brodeur-Edmonds

President Vander Hooven giving his speech during the last half of the inauguration. Personal stories were told by all of the speakers throughout the event.

President Vander Hooven shared his favorite proverb with the crowd. Vander Hooven recited, "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small. Rescue those who are being taken away to death; Hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, 'Behold, we did not know this,' Does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?"

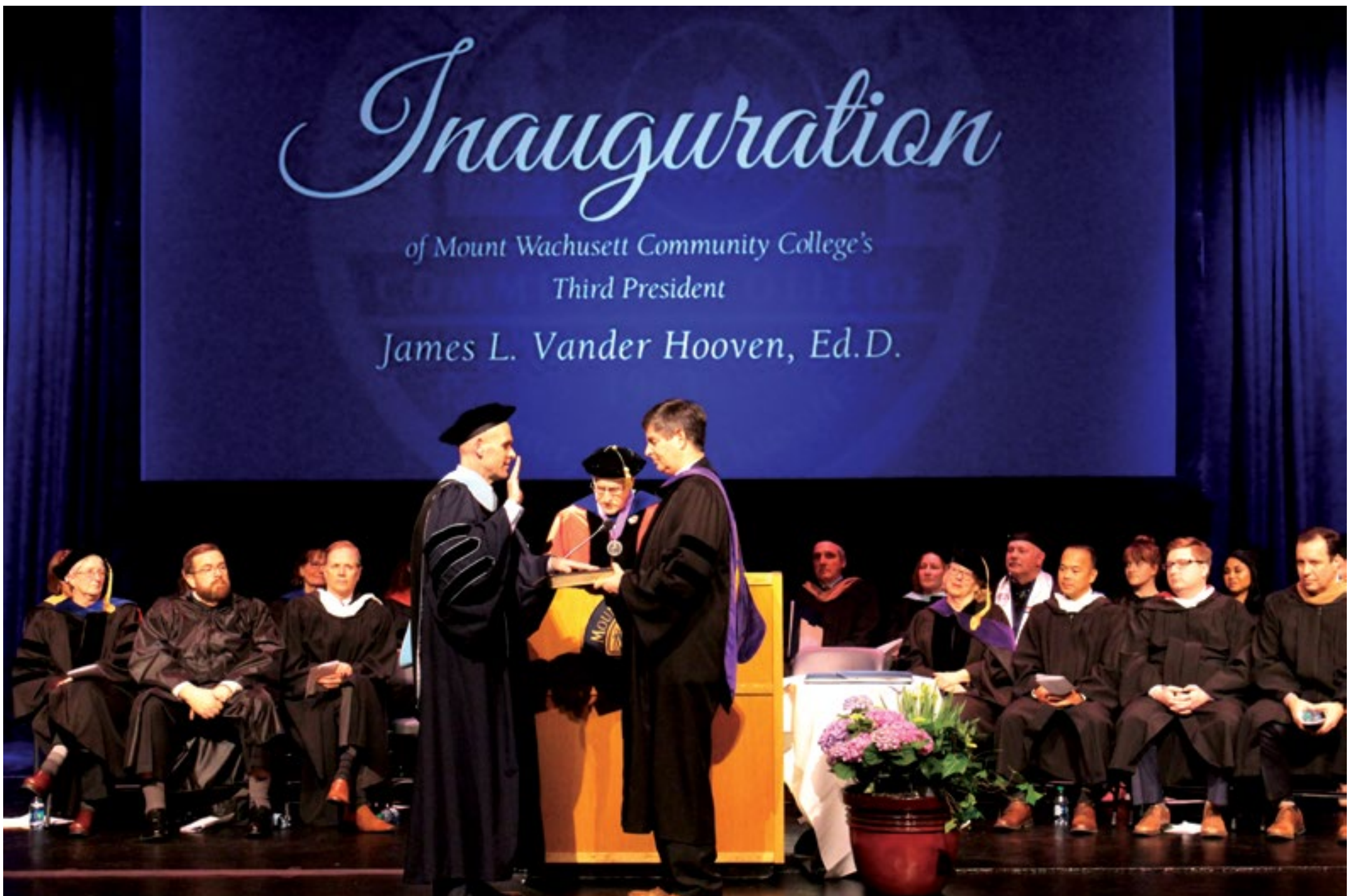


Photo by Benjamin Richard, Caption by Ayana Brodeur-Edmonds

President Vander Hooven takes the Oath of Office during the inauguration.

"This is the moment for empathy," said President Vander Hooven in his speech. "This is the moment for supporting one another. This is the moment for empowering one another in community... This is the moment you discover for yourselves the strength of Mount Wachusett Community College."

FEATURE



Photos by Ayana Brodeur-Edmonds and Benjamin Richard

(Top Left) From left to right: Dr. Rachel Frick Cardelle (MWCC Vice President of Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development), Dr. Cathy Canney (Fitchburg State University Associate VP of Academic Affairs), Dr. Alberto Cardelle (Fitchburg State University Provost and VP of Academic Affairs), Dr. Richard Lapideus (Fitchburg State University President)

Dr. Frick Cardelle said, "I am excited for the future. With the new president, we are building on a wonderful past. President Vander Hooven is a visionary leader."

"Jim and I work together," said Dr. Lapideus. "He's a nice and thoughtful guy. Jim is always looking for a way to strengthen the relationship between schools for transferring students."

(Top right) Sharmese Gunn (center), senior resource specialist for Gateway to College, is accompanied by her Gateway to College students.

"I took all of my students and classes from Gateway to College to the inauguration," said Gunn. "It was historic for students to see. The students have never seen anything like it and it was great."

(Center-Far Left) Professor Candace Shivers, Master of Ceremony.

"Life is a journey, not a destination," said Professor Shivers as she gave her speech on-stage during the inauguration. "I have worked here for the last fourteen years with the best people in the world."

(Center-Second Left) Student volunteer Brittany Stephenson from Student Life.

During the reception, there was free food and several other amenities offered. Student volunteers from Student Life ran the booths.

(Center-Second Right) Joyce Kirkwood, Police Officer at Mount Wachusett Community College

"President Vander Hooven is an amazing individual with a heart of gold and he really cares about the students and faculty," said Officer Kirkwood.

(Center-Far Right) Arthur "Skip" McDonald (Human Services major), and Aimee Ouellet (Early Childhood Education major).

"Loved it!" exclaimed Ouellet, referring to the president's inauguration. "I loved to see all the support of family, friends, students and staff!"

McDonald described the event as "very positive and fun. It also got emotional at times."

(Bottom-Left) Newly-inaugurated President Vander Hoover joins children in enjoying a preview for "The Little Mermaid Junior."

(Bottom-Right) The President's new official portrait.

Clear the Hurdle of High School with Dual Enrollment

by Elizabeth Jones

OBSERVER CORRESPONDENT

When a journey comes to a fork in the road, take both paths. While this may sound physically impossible, it is exactly what high school students, like Kaitlyn Fales, are doing in the dual-enrollment program.

Fales, President of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, Treasurer of Alpha Beta Gamma Honor Society, and a member of the Early College Student Advisory Council, has another title as well: Pathways Student.

Pathways, described as “A nearly college high school opportunity for motivated high school/home school juniors who would like to get a jump start on college,” is one of three dual enrollment programs along with Gateway and general Dual Enrollment.

“It is a lifetime opportunity that students should always try to take advantage of, if they can,” Fales advised. Choosing to leave high school in junior year might seem like a scary

decision for any 16-year-old, but Fales saw it a different way.

“I felt as if I never truly fit into the typical high school environment; I wanted a change to be more independent and be challenged. I felt like becoming a part of Pathways was a perfect opportunity to explore my potential and step outside my comfort zone,” she said.

Fales also credited the director and advisor, Natalie Mercier and her office for playing a supportive role in the program and being one of the best aspects of the program as a whole.

“I have been able to be an adult two years early, which is unlike anything I’ve experienced before. I can be appreciated for my abilities and be surrounded by exceptional individuals who inspire me every day.”

Kaitlyn and other Pathways students in her year will graduate this May with a high school diploma and an associate’s degree.



Photo by Brianna Stevens

Kaitlyn Fales, leading a meeting of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society.

Criminal Justice Student Busts a Criminal

by Alan Wong

OBSERVER CORRESPONDENT

Criminal Justice major, Nathan Oliva completed a one-semester internship recently at the Gardner Police Department for the opportunity to obtain experience he would not have otherwise gotten from being in the school. He said internships are encouraged for all Criminal Justice majors.

Oliva said, “It’s a terrific way to get into the books [at the station] and there’s a possible chance they might even remember you, which is obviously beneficial.” Oliva participated in this internship because it would be on his resume and he needed something

to get his foot in the door.

“Gaining experience in the field is crucial; when you’re out on the job you need to know your knowledge,” said Oliva.

Oliva shadowed police officers Jeffrey LaBonte, Corey Chauvette, and Ryan Coates. The internship also showed Oliva how it feels to be dispatched and to join roll calls for officers.

When in the field, interns can answer calls and go on rides along with the officers to gain “on the clock” experience.

Oliva had many interesting experiences during the internship. He said that he accompanied Officer Coates during a foot-

chase after a criminal, holding cocaine, tried to flee his vehicle. The man was arrested because he resisted arrest while trying to toss the evidence, which Oliva was asked to retrieve and bring back to Officer Coates. Another situation Oliva experienced was with Officer Jeffrey LaBonte, who went on a chase to confiscate five grams of heroin.

Oliva’s advice for other Criminal Justice majors: “To defuse a situation is a skill you can’t learn but have to experience, really.” When asked about any last thoughts, “I did this for the field experience and to highlight my college experience,” said Oliva.



Photo by Brianna Stevens

The Gardner Police Headquarters, located on Main Street.

The Science of Finding Your Niche

by Alan Wong

OBSERVER CORRESPONDENT

You never know where a path will lead you. Biology professor William LeFrancois got into science because he wanted to become a doctor when he was younger. LeFrancois was a pre-med major and tried to get into medical school, but was not selected due to lack of experience. In order to gain experience, he became an instructor. He enjoyed the school scene so much, he decided to stick with teaching instead.

LeFrancois’ favorite part about teaching is interacting with students and helping them understand concepts in their majors. He also thinks helping students is fun

and said that he feels better when they understand.

LeFrancois worked at Boston University and taught a foreign exchange student from China who knew little English.

She carried a dictionary to class and seemed to be at a disadvantage, but she persevered and received an A for the class.

As a result of this experience, his advice to students is “always hang in there and don’t give up on things you want.”

This goes along with LeFrancois’ favorite quote, “That which does not kill us makes us stronger,” by Friedrich Nietzsche, a German Philosopher.

LeFrancois has been a

member of the Department of Biological Sciences for 13 years. He works in the Division of Science, Technology, Business and Mathematics and teaches Anatomy & Physiology I and II, Biology, Introduction to Nutrition, Allied Health and advises the nutrition club as well as the music club.

He considers himself an avid music listener and collector of many objects, especially antiques. His favorite items are cars, pocket watches, and old science equipment.

In his spare time, he enjoys classic black and white movies and Sci-fi films, such as the *Star Trek* series.



Photo by Brianna Stevens

Model of a human skeleton found in the science wing.

The Crazy Life of a Self-Published Author

Part One: The Whirlwind of Writing and Promoting

by Michele Walsky

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Have you written the Great American novel but are not sure what to do next? Perhaps, poetry, memoirs or a comic book awaits. Last year my dream of becoming a published author came true and I am happy to share my experience so yours can too. And the best part, it is free!

Independent Authors are Boss: Just because something is free does not mean it is easy street. Indie authors wear all the hats. We are writers, editors, formatters, publishers, cover designers, promoters, marketers and our own PR firm all rolled into one. Some authors shell out big bucks to hire them separately, but I am in the starving artist stage so I do everything except cover design. It takes work, but Indies have more control than traditionally published authors.

There are several online companies that offer free self-publishing. I plan to branch out, but so far I have only muddled my way through the Amazon maze and that is mainly due to the luck of successful friend Mary “M.P. McDonald” who bushwhacked the territory years before.

I have been writing since sixth grade but in the midst of life, things



Photo by Brianna Stevens

Michele, writing as Chele Pedersen Smith, has two books published with more in the works.

got busy and writing was pushed aside. And then a few summers ago, an idea for a book kept circling my brain like a vulture and would not go away. It was a juicy tale based on real life events and I was not so sure it was a good

idea. But it got me writing again!

Jealousy is a Catalyst: The road to my dream actually started with jealousy. A few years ago, I spotted a Facebook post by a mutual friend beaming about Mary’s published book. Suddenly,

the Green-eyed Monster roared, pulled me up by the collar and said, “This was supposed to be your goal, Dummy!”

Envy gets a bad rap, but in this case, it was a good thing. It was the kick in the pants I needed. I

reached out to Mary and bent her ear. I was antsy to get started. Too bad I needed to finish writing that story first. The funny thing is, the initial novel I was working on was not *Behind Frenemy Lines*, the book I published first. Nor did it become the second, *The Pearly Gates Phone Company*. However *Confessions of a Goody-Goody* will be published someday. In the meantime, an excerpt appears in our college’s literary magazine, *A Certain Slant*.

Unlocking Writer’s Block. Are you chomping at the bit to write but find staring at a blank page or screen daunting? If writer’s block is standing in the way, leave your desk. Do something physical. I find mundane chores let my mind rest while setting creativity free. Dishwashing leads to daydreaming. Also, there are magical powers in a shower stream. The only downside is the mad dash to jot down the fantastic formations freed from the brain cells. If only a cranial flash drive existed!

Spill the Story: Get it all out. No worries if it is not your best work. You will rearrange, revise, copy and paste later. Once the story is complete, go back and add details to make it more dimensional. Since I write **continued on page 10 “Self-Publishing” >>>**

Worst Company in America finds *A Way Out*

by Zach Pavlosky

OBSERVER CORRESPONDENT

“Couch co-op gaming is dead!”

“Gamers are only interested in vast, open world experiences!”

“Character-driven narrative has no place in the gaming industry!”

Developer Hazelight Studios’ newest title, *A Way Out*, succeeds not just with eye-catching visuals, smooth controls, and a solid framerate, but by shouting “NO!” to all the false and hyperbolic statements above.

A Way Out is a third-person, multiplayer co-op, action-adventure title that features many of the expected accoutrements of a modern video game: white, male protagonists, revenge plot, quick-time events, and more. It is what is noticeably absent from the game that not only makes it stand out from others of its ilk, but also serves as a guiding light for an industry that is unfortunately mired in controversy, politics and doubt.

Electronic Arts- the publisher behind *A Way Out*- is one of, if not the, most reviled name in all

of gaming culture. In fact, the company was voted as Worst Company in America in 2012, 2013, and 2017, according to *Consumerist*. EA has been at the forefront of all manner of shady business practices such as, micro-transactions, pay walls, and pay-to-win systems. The fact that *A Way Out* is completely devoid of any such anti-consumer implementations is a much-needed sigh of relief. The game is also only \$30. That is half the cost of typical triple-A titles. And to sweeten the deal even more, your co-op partner doesn’t need to purchase the game if you already have; a feature unique to *A Way Out* called Friend Pass, according to *GameSpot*. This is simply not typical behavior from EA. Their mantra is very much, “If it doesn’t make us money, then we’re not interested.”

There is a handful of reasons as to why EA has chosen to go down this route. The most obvious and controversial reason would be last November’s *Star Wars: Battlefront*

2, which made headlines due to how nefarious the micro-transaction systems were in the game. The fallout cost EA millions and Disney even threatened to revoke their exclusive *Star Wars* license, something that clearly shook EA to its core.

I haven’t picked up and played a video game in many years; not because I stopped liking them, or not enough time to devote to them, but because of industry greed. Hearing all the positivity and praise for *A Way Out*- whether it’s the reduced price, absence of anti-consumer practices, or story-driven focus – makes me wish playing video games was still a daily activity for me. Unfortunately, games like *A Way Out* are far and few between. Here’s hoping that Hazelight Studios can be a harbinger for a brighter future within the video game industry.

A Way Out is available now on PlayStation 4, Xbox One, and Microsoft Windows for \$30 across all platforms.

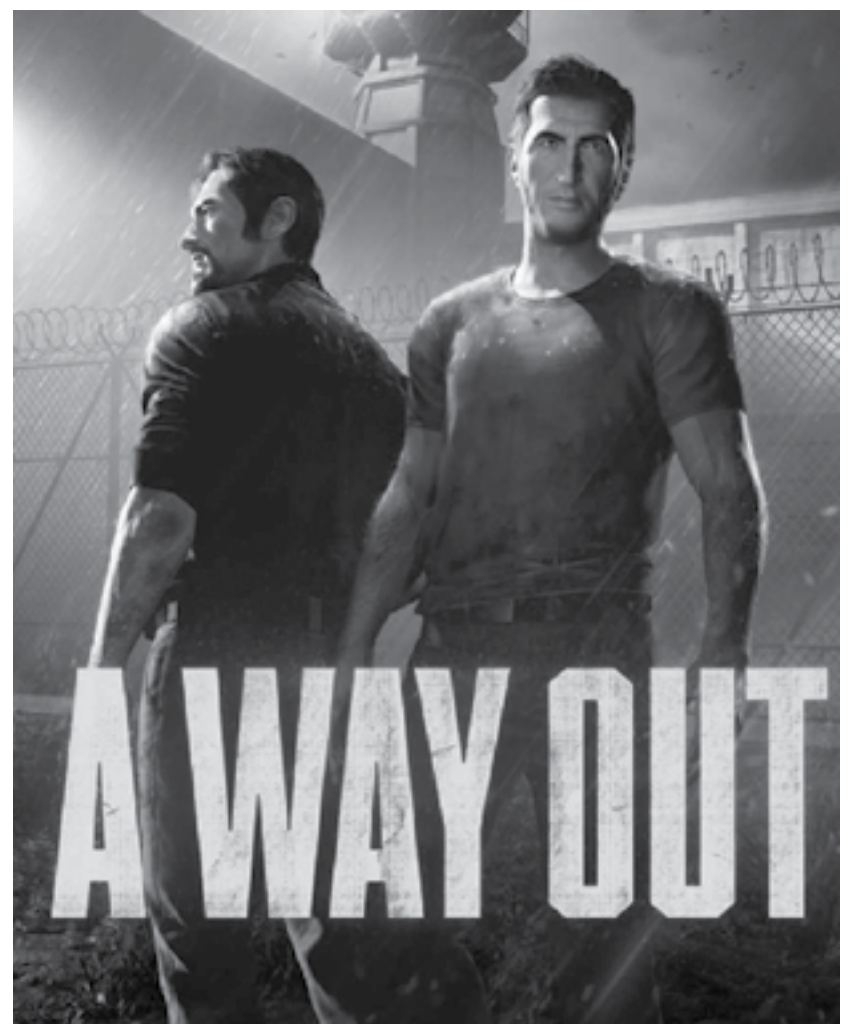


Image from trueachievements.com

A Way Out, developed by Hazelight Studios and published by Electronic Arts.

"DAWG DAYS" ©.2010

- S. BISSONNETTE

COMICS



Comic by Steph Bissonnette

Get Inked: A Splatoon 2 Review

by Alexa Nogueira
OBSERVER CORRESPONDENT

Nintendo's paintball-style squid sport is back. First released in 2015, the original installment redefined online multiplayer shooters with its child-friendly game play, lore, and colorful world and character designs. The ink had nearly dried on *Splatoon* when the company revived the well-loved shooter game with the release of *Splatoon 2* for the Nintendo Switch.

In *Splatoon 2* you play as an Inklings, which is a child that can change from kid to squid as fast as you can say the catchphrase, "Stay fresh!"

You can customize your Inklings with various hairstyles, clothes, and weapons ranging from a simple paint bucket to dual-pistols.

The game offers several different online multiplayer modes where you can choose a weapon and spray enemies and turf with colorful ink. For the lone squid types, there's also a single-player mode which couples *Splatoon 2*'s unique gameplay and story.

When playing online, you can choose to participate in Regular Battles, Ranked Battles, League Battles, or a mode new to the series, Salmon Run.

Between *Splatoon 2* and its predecessor, not much has changed in Regular Battles. The goal is simple: You and a team of three other Inklings (paired up in the game's online lobby) battle against another team to cover as much turf as possible in your team's ink color.

After three minutes, the team who has covered the most turf wins.

Once you reach level 10 in Regular Battles, there are three distinct types of Ranked Battles you can play: Splat Zones, Tower Control, and Rainmaker. Splat Zones is the most reminiscent of the traditional Regular Battle, where your team's goal is to drench select areas of the map in your ink. To win, you must keep those areas covered.



Image from Wikimedia Commons, by Bjarkan
Splatoon 2, released by Nintendo

Tower Control focuses less on the turf war concept, and more on the idea of maintaining control. Your team's objective is to ride a tower through enemy turf without losing control. The team that successfully rides the tower to the end of enemy turf wins.

Rainmaker is *Splatoon 2*'s unique twist on capture the flag. Your team must carry a special weapon, the Rainmaker, all the way to the enemy base. The team who succeeds in bringing the Rainmaker to the enemy base wins.

The more Ranked Battles you win, the higher your in-game rank becomes. The ranking range starts at a C- and builds up the game's current highest rank of S+. Once the middle rank B- is reached, access to League Battles is permitted. This protective shield mode lasts for two hours and allows you to play in Ranked Battle modes without risking your actual rank.

In the game's newest online mode, Salmon Run, you work for Mr. Grizz of Grizzco Industries, collecting eggs from Salmonids with a team of three other players. Your only enemies are the Salmonids, and your goal is to fill your egg quota in each of three rounds. Fulfilling your quota will earn you a pay raise, but if you do not collect enough eggs or your team gets wiped out, Mr. Grizz will give you a hefty pay cut.

While *Splatoon 2* is renowned for its multiplayer online battles, single-player mode is just as brilliant. In this mode, you are not just a regular Inklings, but Agent 4

of the New Squidbeak Splatoon.

You are recruited by Inklings idol and secret agent Marie, a member of the Squid Sisters pop duo who were featured in the original *Splatoon*. In single-player mode, your goal is to find the city of Inkopolis' main power source, the Great Zapfish.

Additionally, you are also searching for Callie, the other Squid Sister who goes missing at the beginning of the game.

In single-player mode you battle through 32 top secret missions, collecting mini Zapfish and inking Octarians, which is a race of octo-humanoids who are the natural enemies of Inklings.

During each mission, you can also collect Sunken Scrolls, which are scattered throughout each level. Each scroll reveals the history of the Inklings and the lore that single-player mode revolves around.

Overall, *Splatoon 2* maintains the spirit of the original *Splatoon*, while upgrading the gameplay experience with the inclusion of new characters, weapons, and battle modes.

Quirky and non-violent, *Splatoon 2* remains one of the best takes of the online multiplayer shooter genre to date, with the only drawbacks being a poor online team-pairing system and lack of a chat system among team members during online battles. But, it is apparent Nintendo's *Splatoon 2* has listened to its fan base and learned from the errors of the original *Splatoon*, earning the game an 8 out of 10.

Self-Publishing

>>> continued from page 9

off the cuff, I was happy all my storylines tied together in *Behind Frenemy Lines*. But I realized my female assassin, Galaxy O'Jordan, did not act very kick-ass. She was too much in love. So I made her more ruthless. I added unique gadgets to her arsenal and made sure her protagonist spy partner, Lee Clancy, struck back with his own sly vengeance.

Rise and Revise: Edit to the best of your ability, and then edit again. Weed out typos and grammar mistakes. I am an obsessive revision queen but it helps to have fresh eyes look over the work. Typos are pesky fleas. A few still get left behind no matter how fine-toothed the comb.

Despite bribes of homemade cookies, I was only able to lure one test reader for my first book. Thank goodness my 70 year-old cousin stepped up from Pennsylvania. He offered valuable adverb advice, as in "ditch 'em!" He made me laugh when he said, "If I see one more ruefully, nervously, or wryly, I'm going to scream!"

He was right. They were bogging down the dialogue. (Funny, I just discovered Stephen King gives the same advice in his book, *On Writing*.) Unfortunately Cousin Obie became ill and was not able to fully devote much time detecting anything else, but he did finish the book and give feedback. I appreciate his selfless service. Since I was mainly on my own, I splurged on Grammarly and walked through the story thinking like a reader, covering any possible plot holes. Reading my manuscript out loud also helped the war on error.

I read *CreateSpace and Kindle: Self-publishing Master Class* by Rick Smith and Mary recommended *Go Indie* by David Neth. But after my rom-com espionage came together, I had more fun inspecting my favorite novel, *Summer Sisters*, by Judy Blume as a study guide. For good measure, I flipped through a spy novel by Lee Child and perused John Graham's work too.

Take notice how dialogue is set up—separate lines and paragraphs for each character. What surprised me most was how the first paragraph in each chapter and scene change were not indented. I then compared how the authors separated those scene changes. John Grisham centered

three simple asterisks while Blume used nothing at all. Notice also how the publishers handle the front matter: copyright, title page, dedications and disclaimers. "This is a work of fiction, any resemblance to actual names and places is coincidental," and all that jazz. I tailored mine since one of the plots involved a former president and a Hollywood starlet. I never want to libel anyone, even people no longer living. We must keep our image in mind as well.

Promoting Tricks: Peddling yourself and your books feels more like careening into a terrific traffic jam. There are so many indie authors. Sometimes it gets discouraging. Writing is a lonely job, and while I love the solitude, stumbling into a Goodreads discussion thread on review swaps opened doors. I read genres I would not have read otherwise and my books gained a few reviews. I met other Indies who have shared tips and helped me out. I have more resources now, a relief to Mary's ear I am sure. I am still figuring things out. The authors help each other by hosting "takeovers" in each other's Facebook groups, celebrating new cover releases, presales, and reviews. We tease readers with excerpts, games and giveaways. It is not very lucrative but we gain exposure. It is about getting our name out there.

Speaking of which, I write under the pen name Chele Pedersen Smith. I have author pages on Amazon and Goodreads, which means cranking out third-person biographies, which is weird at first. I also keep book and ad descriptions exciting and write a blog on Goodreads.

Indies are always looking for new ways to promote books, preferably cost-free. Advertising with Amazon gets expensive and is hit or miss. I use social media, give out bookmarks, and have mailed free paperbacks in Goodreads giveaways. My newest pieces of swag are coffee mugs and I have reading/signing gigs at libraries and craft fairs.

It takes a lot of creative cogs to get a book noticed. Some days there is not much left after pouring it all into a story. And to be honest, it does get tiring. But my saving grace is, I love to write, and in the big scheme of things, that is why I do it in the first place.

Read how to publish on Amazon, Part Two: *Taming the Amazon Jungle* on *The Mount Observers'* website, www.mountobserver.com. It contains technical information and links to Amazon's eBook and printing sites. Feel free to email me cpsmithbooks22@gmail.com with any questions. Visit my Amazon page to read samples of my books at amazon.com/author/chelepedersensmith.

STUDENTS

From The Observer Staff: Dress For Success Event

It has come to our attention that there was some misleading information in our previous edition of *The Mount Observer* regarding the Dress for Success Fashion Expo.

The 2018 Dress for Success Fashion Expo was the biggest it has been to date, involving not only the Parent Support Group (PSG), but also Women of the World (WOW) and the Sexuality and Gender Alliance (SAGA) clubs. Planning for this event began in January and continued up to the event. Members of PSG worked tirelessly to be sure the event went smoothly.

PSG members include Elizabeth LaPan (PSG President), Nicole Wetherby, Lisa Ferrara-Caron, Stefani Barton, Marie Ewing, and Erin Jones. According to Ann Reynolds, CCAMPIS Advisor, Student Services, and PSG advisor, the students of is group deserve endless thanks and recognition for the success of the event.

The WOW club members Gina Vilayphone (WOW President) and Jacquelyn Vokey also created new opportunities for this event, including hair and makeup services from Toni and Guy of Worcester, also Amanda Gidopoulos of Wicked Hair and Nails of Leominster and Vilayphone of Mia Bella Salon in Leominster as well as Vokey, a freelance makeup artist.



Photo by Kathy Matson

Lisa Ferrara-Caron and Nicole Wetherby of the Parent Support Group.

Vokey said, "It was really important to give people the confidence to go and pick out clothes, wear makeup, and look professional."

Volunteers from Toni and Guy of Worcester were Destinee Ferrara, and her teacher Anna,

Adrienne Hall, Alyssa McDonald, and Abeeha Bhatti assisted with the makeup and hair. WOW also organized student models to have a fashion show and exemplify dressing for success. Those models were Jharel Jerez, who brought in many students to the event, Tianna Caisse, and Jasmine Ruiz. Vilayphone said, "It was great to see everyone get together and learn how to look professional."

The SAGA members are Taylor Rameau (SAGA President), Felix Oliver and Ayanna Brodner-Edmonds. Felix Oliver stepped up to take headshots for the event when the original photographer canceled last minute. SAGA provided Thank You cards to send to employers after an interview, while Pat Brewerton provided the template for students to fill those cards with.

The Dress for Success event was scheduled before the Career Fair so students could learn and be

motivated to dress professionally. Vilayphone said, "This event definitely helped boost the Career Fair." The Career Fair provided students and the local community with a variety of job opportunities and internships.

Reynolds, after the event, said in an email, "...Thank you to all who donated clothes, accessories and beauty products, Pat Brewerton, who encourages us every year to do this event, David Iannaccone (SAGA Club Advisor), for going above and beyond, Shelley Nicholson, and her 'Project Runway' advice to the 'shoppers,' Bill and Gardner who were there at set-up and clean-up...Ginny's Thrift Store and 'My Sisters Closet,' for their donation of clothing and support, and thank you to all those I may have forgotten to thank!" Reynolds thanked every student who was previously named above, as well as all other students who helped make the event possible.



Photos courtesy of MWCC and Jacquelyn Vokey

(Top) Felix Oliver of SAGA taking a headshot photo of Gina Vilayphone; (Bottom-Left) Jacquelyn Vokey does touchups on Jharel Jerez; (Bottom-Right) Gina Vilayphone and Jacquelyn Vokey of the Women of the World Club.

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STUDENTS

2018 Job Fair MOUNT CHITCHAT

by Alan Wong
OBSERVER CORRESPONDENT

Brandon Alexander Parker attended the Job Fair March 21st because he did not have a job prior to the fair and saw the opportunity to gain a foothold. He emphasized the atmosphere of the school was the main reason he attended the Job Fair in the first place. Parker found a company called the National Ecological Observatory Network, a wildlife observatory that watches over animal life and the ecosystem. Parker chose this job due to the overwhelming support his Aunt which gave Parker the love of

nature. This sparked an interest in bird watching, which compelled him to pursue photography. Stephen Hilton went to the Job Fair not only to build his resume, but to also broaden his interests. He hopes to finally make a good first impression on a prospective employer. While at the fair, Hilton was drawn to the Seven-Hills Program because he considers himself to be a very caring person. "I want to help people honestly; I may be good with numbers but I think my true calling is in health," said Hilton.



Arthur "Skip" McDonald
Human Services, A Veteran
Third semester

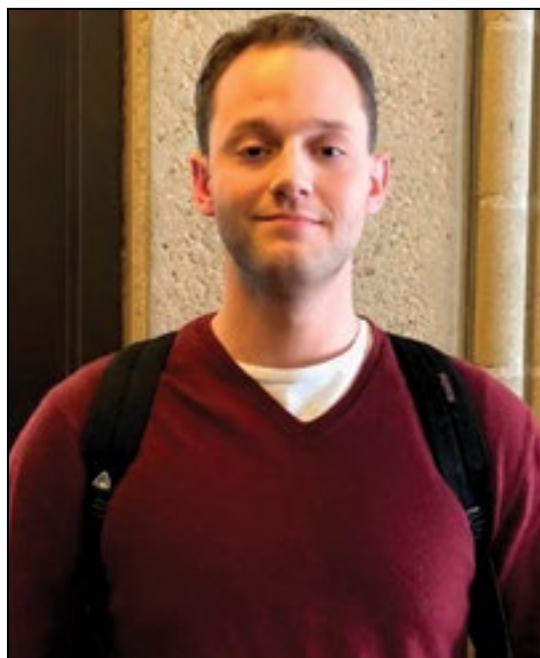
"I love being here and I don't EVER want to leave!"



Victoria Dasilva
Nursing/ former Gateway student
Fourth semester
"I'm grateful for all the doors Gateway opened for me."



Photo by Alan Wong
Stephen Hilton at the 2018 MWCC Job Fair



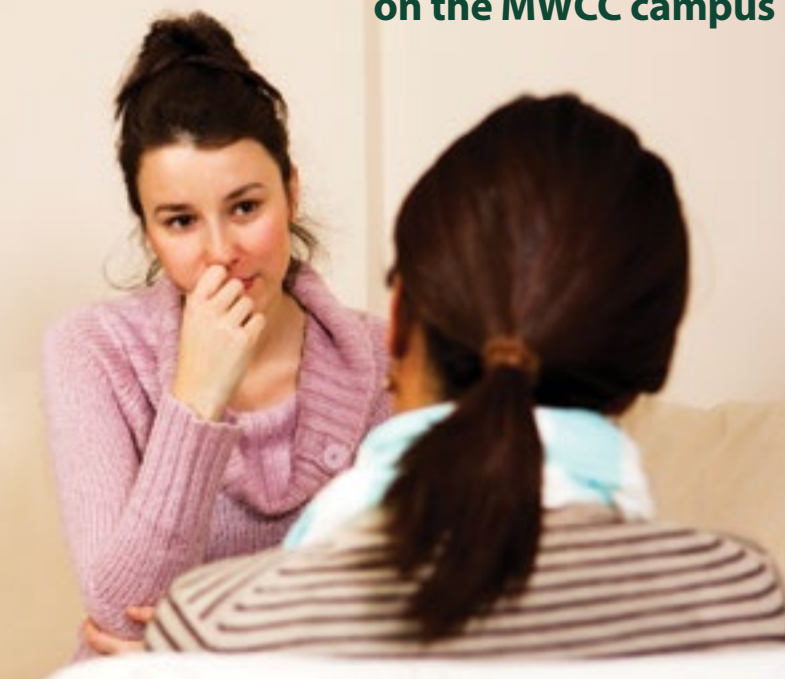
John Simolaris
Liberal Arts and Sciences
Fourth semester

"It's been a positive, eye-opening experience, full of self-discovery."



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May 15th
10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Transfer Table
Mount Wachusett Community College

