

The Mount Observer

“Voices of the students of Mount Wachusett Community College”

PREVIEWS

The Status of The Mount Observer Going Forward...

Due to the recent quarantine procedures put in place, *The Mount Observer* will be moving solely online.

See page 7 for more details.

A Little Help From My Friends

Rebecca Schlier, 22, from Westminster, is a Graphic and Interactive Design (GID) major and is completing her last semester here at MWCC.

For the full article, see page 3

Opioid Crisis Calls for Community Action

The Massachusetts opioid crisis has been getting increasingly worse throughout the past ten years.

For the full article, see pages 4-5

Review: Four Year Strong's Brain Pain

Worcester native band Four Year Strong's newest album *Brain Pain* is their best since *Enemy of the World* in 2009.

For the full article, see page 5



Barriers at the Border

Attorney sheds light on the realities of the immigration process

By **Abbi Rameau**
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Immigration attorney Cindy Burke recently spoke at MWCC, presenting the struggles immigrants face in U.S. detention centers and encouraging people to change their attitudes.

Burke addressed a crowded room of interested students for an hour, moving some students to tears. The event opened the conversation on immigration in a calm way where people expressed their opinions peacefully.

Burke detailed the conditions she saw at the border, speaking of chain link fences meant for 15 people holding up to 60 or more immigrants. She described four meals a day that are all the same: two slices of white bread



Image from burkelawgroup.business.site

and a piece of bologna, dumped over the top of the fences.

“We’ve always had border issues,” Burke said, “but we never treated people this way.”

On top of the overflow of the

fences and the food situation, immigrants are either given

blankets made of recycled aluminum or thin nylon for warmth. Burke also mentioned

there are no pillows, no beds,

and only one toilet in the enclosures.

Burke also spoke about the process immigrants must go

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White Fragility Event Starts Important Conversation

Brewer Center hosts community dialogue on modern racial issues



Image courtesy of mwcc.edu

Shelley Nicholson, Director of the Brewer Center for Civic Learning and Development, hosted the White Fragility discussion on campus

By **Dylan Quigley**
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

White Fragility, the title of a book and a term coined by author Robin DiAngelo, is a way of describing the way some white people may feel when confronted about racial problems or injustices. Shelley Nicholson, Director of the Brewer Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement, knew she had to have a conversation about *White Fragility* at the Mount when DiAngelo’s book was brought to her by a colleague.

At the White Fragility Dialogue, there were

approximately 15-20 people in attendance, with a mix of races and a mix of faculty and students. Nicholson opened up with what “White Fragility” means and at each table a set of questions was put in place that would get the conversation flowing between the people at the tables. Nicholson stated that if the event was referred to as a “conversation on modern racial problems” and DiAngelo’s book was used as a talking point, maybe the turn out would have been better.

Each table discussed different racial struggles in modern society. One table focused on

police states and how everyday laws affect people of color differently than white people. Another table discussed how our society is built in a way that benefits the racial divide; this was backed by the fact that we have Black History Month instead of celebrating black history 24/7, like our society does for white history. Afterwards, participants at the tables shared what they talked about and learned.

As an undergraduate, Nicholson did diversity work around campus and learned

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White Fragility

Immigration Issues

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early on about racial injustices in our societies. She talked about how our society has laws and systems in place that make it very difficult for us to move forward on racial equality. For example, she said that our drug laws have been targeting people of color for decades, and it is no

injustices don't affect me, but that would be falling right into the category of white fragility." Nicholson also agreed that DiAngelo's book should be a common read in schools and that faculty and staff should have to read it too. Nicholson said that we should be having conversations on

through before they are granted admittance into the United States. For people from Africa and the Middle East, it generally takes eight to nine months on average to reach the border, usually crossing deserts and oceans.

current administration's policies, specifically the Public Charge rule, have made it nearly impossible for almost half of incoming immigrants to become residents. The Public Charge rule states that intending immigrants cannot

the facility. Immigrants that are being held are threatened if they speak up about conditions to reporters. Since these centers are all privately owned but used for national security, guards are trained privately and have a great deal of freedom to treat people

"I could have just stepped back and ignored it because racial injustices don't affect me, but that would be falling right into the category of white fragility."

- Shelley Nicholson

"They went through all this, only to get tortured again."

-Cindy Burke

secret that people of color get harsher sentences than white people do. When asked why she was so willing to listen to the white fragility argument while being a white person herself, she said, "I could have just stepped back and ignored it because racial

racial injustices as communities, even having the conversations in classrooms to engage the youth more effectively. Nicholson clarified that these conversations are important because the broken systems are not going to change if no one is talking about them.

"They went through all this, only to get tortured again," she said. Once immigrants reach the border, anything that is on their person, whether it has sentimental or instrumental value, is taken and thrown away. Cell phones are discarded, love letters from partners and family photos are tossed in the trash. Even cans of food are taken, and none of the items are ever returned. Burke was moved to tears explaining this process. Burke explained that the

have received any government benefits, and if they have, it must have been for a limited period of time. However, receiving government benefits is by no means a rare occurrence, said Burke, since half of US citizens have received benefits at one point or another, so the Public Charge rule cuts off more people than it helps. When asked what prevents the media from reporting on the events of the border, Burke explained that they're not allowed to bring cameras into

however they deem appropriate. In response to a question about what the general population can do to help immigrants, Burke said, "the change has to start with people not feeling like immigration is a bad thing." Besides a change in attitude and opening the conversation on immigration, she also emphasized donating to nonprofit organizations that are able to help in the areas of the borders, as well as volunteering with similar organizations.



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Don't Waste Used Textbooks

This program at MWCC aids veterans with low incomes



By Jayden Hooper
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

The Veteran Textbook Donation Program supports veterans and veteran dependent students by allowing them to rent textbooks given to the program from other students.

Robert Mayer has overseen the donation program since 2014. When asked about the importance of the program, Mayer said, "In one way or another our veteran students have made an enormous commitment to serving our

country. Some through the actual combat and some the readiness to be deployed to combat. This kind of commitment deserves our gratitude."

Sergeant Andrew Brunell, who is in charge of signing out the textbooks, said that approximately 40 veterans this semester have rented out textbooks required for their courses.

Brunell said, "My wife and I... the first semester that we came here I was using my VA benefits.

I got a little bit of a book stipend, but we went to the bookstore and purchased all of our books, brand new, and they cost \$2,000."

When asked why students should donate their textbooks, Brunell stated that "some students sell their textbooks back to the bookstore for pennies on the dollar." He went on to mention how donating textbooks allow students to feel good about where their textbooks are going.

Brunell mentioned how many veterans are only going to school

and not working, but are getting paid by the VA so they're living on the lower side of income. The program works as a "safety net" for those who cannot afford their textbooks or may need to rent one temporarily if their books haven't been delivered in time for their classes.

Any students who are interested in donating their textbooks to veteran or veteran dependent students can see Robert Mayer or Andrew Brunell in Veteran Services.

Photo by Sr. Airman Michael Bueno, courtesy of MWCC

Robert Mayer

Working From Home



"The guy on the left is using a laptop to dial into his desktop at the office. The guy on the right is using that laptop to do just about everything else!"

Bob Mayer
Director of Veteran Services



The Rx and Visions staff "prepping for remote services in a responsible, socially distant setting."

Photo Courtesy of Visions Director Gaurav Khanna



"Hi! It's me, The Glitter Slinger, in my new space. Quite a change for this early childhood education professor, but thinking of new ways to stay connected with my students and help them to work with the families and young children they serve.

Peace and glitter,
P.S. Keep calm and wash hands! Notice the glitter hand sanitizer. A gift from a student last Christmas."

Maureen Provost
Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education



Shelley Nicholson, Director of the Brewer Center, works from her Elvis room, or "Graceland North," with her feline co-workers Ragnar and Gwenny.

A Little Help from My Friends

Student gives insight into the support that helped her succeed

By Jayden Hooper

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Rebecca Schlier, 22, from Westminister, is a Graphic and Interactive Design (GID) major and is completing her last semester here at MWCC. She spoke about the struggles of being a student while also coping with mental illnesses, and how she has received support here at the Mount.

Schlier explained the difficulty of juggling homework, daily tasks, and mental illnesses. On bad days, finding the motivation to attend school seems impossible. She feels as though her anxiety and depression hinder the work she does for her graphic arts class.

She expressed her gratitude

to the teachers, friends, and the GID club here at the Mount for providing her with the support she needs. She recalls a time when she was having a particularly challenging day and had overdue assignments in her coding class. Her teacher took notice and spoke with her, without judgment, about how she was doing.

Schlier was previously a dual enrollment student and said, “that feeling of support hasn’t changed from being a high schooler to being an adult here, it’s the same kind of support. It doesn’t matter what age you are or who you are.”

Despite having to balance schoolwork, depression, and anxiety, she has managed to

achieve some great feats. Her artwork was displayed in a showcase that was part of the GID program and she has been the secretary of the GID club for the past 2 semesters.

Schlier is currently in a portfolio class that allows her to work directly with a client. She is partnering with the Agricultural Commission in Westminister to create a homepage for them.

She is hoping to submit more work to be displayed and is thankful to have the opportunity to work with clients and expand her resume and experience. She revealed that although she is sad to be leaving the Mount, she is excited for what the future holds and for the opportunity to apply what she has learned.



Photo by Betsy Torres

Rebecca Schlier winning an award for Website Mock-up Design at the 2019 GID Student Showcase

Profile: Professor Zach Buscher

Mount’s new professor discusses his past and plans for the future

By Peter Edwards

Observer Contributor

New English faculty at the Mount Zach Buscher hopes to continue to improve on his developmental writing class while also expanding his reach to other core college courses as he spends more time here.

Since becoming part of Mount Wachusett Community College’s faculty during the summer of 2019, Zach Buscher has made his presence known in the English department by creating an entirely new and intensive writing class.

Buscher said his work so far with his MWCC students has been “very rewarding,” as he

works intensively four days a week with the students in his 097 class that he created. He’s been able to work with students that weren’t quite ready for college level writing classes and by the end of the semesters he claims that “it is some of the best writing I’ve seen.” Considering Buscher has been teaching at Quinsigamond Community College for the last 11 years of his life shows how impressed he has been so far with the students at MWCC.

Although Buscher considers himself a poet and a writer, his work here implementing a Developmental Writing Class hasn’t gone unnoticed. Professor

Buscher is also a published poet. Poetry wasn’t always his passion, as Buscher was more interested in films and novels in his earlier years. However, during his junior year he was chosen as one of eighty-five students to study abroad in the Netherlands at Emerson College’s Kasteel Well. There he took his first poetry class and since has become a determined and established poet.

After studying abroad in the Netherlands and receiving his Masters in Fine Arts at the University of Arizona in Tucson, Buscher has returned to his home state of Massachusetts. Buscher recalled a story that he thinks propelled him. After

turning in some of his work to his Professor Peter Jay Shippy, Buscher recalled some of the feedback he received from him. Shippy proclaimed Buscher as a “real poet”. At that point his confidence grew exponentially, and he began his journey of becoming a published author.

Since that moment Professor Buscher has been published on platforms such as *2opus*, *SHAMPOO*, *580 Split*, *Otoliths*, and *Tinfoildresses*, with more forthcoming in *My Name is Mud*, *Wheelhouse Magazine*, and *sawbuck*.

Buscher said that his future plans are to continue writing and establish himself as professor

here at MWCC in hopes of being here for the foreseeable future. He has also reignited his passion for getting his work published and has written close to 200 pages of poetry over the last year and half.

Buscher said that some of his most recent work based around personal memoirs landed him a residency this summer at his favorite art museum, the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams. He plans to continue his work on his most recent projects there this summer with hopes of one day getting his own poetry book published.

Let Your Voice be Heard!

Send your stories, poetry, artwork, photography, or other content to
mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu

OPINION

Opioid Crisis Calls for Community Action

Student discusses possible solutions to the Massachusetts opioid crisis



Image from pixabay

By Dylan Quigley

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

The Massachusetts opioid crisis has been getting increasingly worse throughout the past ten years. According to Mass.gov, in 2010 there were 547 deaths from opioid overdoses, and in 2019 there were 2,023 deaths confirmed

with more cases that still aren't finalized. Since 2016, the death toll has flatlined at about 2,000 deaths from opioids annually.

Is there a way we citizens can start to decrease the death toll? As individuals, I think we are almost powerless, but a whole community movement to fight addiction might help things get

moving.

In part, the leveling out of opioid overdose deaths is due to Attorney General Maura Healey. She has been involved in the Narcan Fund, which makes Narcan, the life saving overdose reversal drug, cheaper and easier to buy for first responders. Healey is also suing Purdue

Pharma and the Sackler family for how they advertised opioid medications.

Yes, it's good that first responders have plenty of Narcan, but what about the citizens of Massachusetts? We should have plenty on hand for our loved ones, because sometimes when first responders

get to the overdose victim it's already too late. It's pretty easy to get Narcan as a citizen; just go down to a local pharmacy and they usually have some, or they will order some and it will only take a few days to come in. Most insurance plans even cover Narcan, often with a 10 to 20 dollar co-pay per dose.

I think everyone should have a few doses of Narcan at home, so buy some for yourself, buy some for neighbors, and maybe start community fundraisers to help the people who can't afford it.

One still has to wonder if enough is being done, though. First, the amount of state funding for treatment clinics isn't very high and the state funded clinics don't have the most effective care. Not many of these state-funded clinics are long term or they don't have enough beds. The private clinics and long-term treatment programs have much more success in getting people off opioids, but this can cost patients and their families tens of thousands of dollars.

Right now, there is a bill pending on Beacon Hill that

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"Opioid Crisis" >>>

Are You Satisfied With High School?

Barr foundation strives to reform high school experience

By Magdalen Bresee and Dylan Hatch

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTORS

Are you satisfied with your high school experience? According to a 2015 Gallup Student Poll, only 35% of high schoolers believe they possess adequate problem-solving skills, and only 33% of students feel they have a mentor who encourages their development. These alarming responses reflect the inadequacy of modern secondary education and prompt many to examine the specific elements that are failing students.

The Barr Foundation, in association with its 22 partnering communities throughout New England, including four school districts and MWCC in North Central Massachusetts, is leading the effort to renovate high school by learning from the thoughts and experiences of local students with the Portrait of a Graduate Grant.

Several students from Narragansett Regional High School in Baldwinville, Massachusetts, expressed their concern with the lack of emphasis that's placed on the

practical skills relevant to their courses.

One student, Emma Hughes, stated that while math courses should ideally indoctrinate problem-solving skills, not enough conversation about those skills is being integrated into the

material to make that intention clear.

"There's definitely the outline to make the connections, but I feel like the teachers don't know that we need that. I feel like it should be more explicitly designated that you're not teaching systems of equations

for systems of equations, you're teaching them to show a step-by-step process"

The students generally agreed that explicitly outlining the goals of their education would be vital for them to fully obtain

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"Barr Foundation" >>>



Image from barrfoundation.org

Barr Foundation

Review: Four Year Strong's *Brain Pain*

Worcester band showcases their evolving musical style



Image copyright Four Year Strong and Pure Noise

The album artwork for Four Year Strong's sixth album, *Brain Pain*.

By Nicholas Papini

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Worcester native band Four Year Strong's newest album *Brain Pain* is their best since *Enemy of the World* in 2009.

Brain Pain is the band's sixth studio album and it oozes authenticity in both the sound and lyrics of the songs. Like the album title nods to, the music deals with heavy mental issues such as depression, anxiety, and identity crises. Pop punk as a genre is no stranger to emotional music, but Four Year Strong brings new angles to the genre with each of their albums.

Four Year Strong sets itself apart from the competition in an already niche genre by maintaining a more playful atmosphere and upbeat lyrics, and *Brain Pain* is no exception. "Usefully Useless" juxtaposes lines about depression and identity crises with the beautiful

line in the refrain, "I just don't want to be a wannabe." Set against a backdrop of poppy, upbeat guitar riffs, "Usefully Useless" becomes easily the best song on the album.

Perhaps the most standout song on the album is "Be Good When I'm Gone," about being forced to travel and the agony of leaving a family behind. As many of the band members have wives and kids, the song's downbeat acoustic vibes allow the listener to feel some of what the band members must experience when they go on tour. The echo of, "it gets easier in time" is particularly heartbreaking.

Perhaps the direct opposite of that would be "The Worst

Part About Me." The song's heavy breakdowns are more reminiscent of a pure post-hardcore band, but it does an excellent job of demonstrating the variety of styles available to Four Year Strong.

"Learn to Love the Lie" and "Get out of My Head" are each solid songs which sound like they would not be out of place on one of their previous albums. They are a bit derivative and felt a bit same-y, but they, and the nostalgia-pandering "Seventeen," do not hold the album back by much.

Alan Day, Four Year Strong's frontman, said in a February 27th interview with *Worcester Magazine* that the album as a

whole was meant to show their evolution as musicians from their high school days to now. He stated that the album should feel authentic to a group who "are now grown men in our 30s with families, wives, homes and other things that are important to us in our lives."

Reaffirming the free-spirited vibe that the band gave off, Day revealed in a March 6, 2009 interview with *Unrated Magazine* that the band's name has no real meaning. The band had heard the lyrics in a song by the Get Up Kids and decided to change the lyrics just slightly from five to four to make it their own.

Barr Foundation

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those goals; however, they felt as if the administration doesn't take their opinions into as much consideration as it should.

Another student, Mary Lawindy, stated that while the administration tries to hear student voices, "it's not a priority."

High school could inspire and encourage students by helping

process achieves this goal by opening lines of communication between high schools and other community stakeholders to promote a widespread collaborative effort in changemaking. Several schools in the north central Massachusetts area have been chosen to receive the grant and initiate the process. These schools include Fitchburg High School, Gardner

academically successful in higher education. By the end of this investigative process that includes examination of strengths as well as gaps, educators will be able to implement meaningful changes in their schools that ensure those goals will be met.

Although the Barr Foundation works diligently to achieve its goal, amending the flaws of high school ultimately requires student feedback and cooperation. No voices are more influential and vital to reinventing the curriculum than those of students who are actively undergoing the high school experience. If you wish to join the movement and share your high school experiences (whether they be positive or negative), please contact uwyyv@mwcc.mass.edu.

Current dual enrollment students Maggie Bresee and Dylan Hatch plan to continue writing more articles throughout the semester exposing the experiences and thoughts of current high school students. They will work to ensure your feedback is reflected in the objectives and outcomes of our project.

them identify and expand upon their personal strengths. Instead, the modern curriculum revolves around standardized testing that overshadows students' varied academic strengths and ambitions. The Barr Foundation seeks to emphasize students' individuality by enabling them to build upon their personal strengths to succeed in their unique post-secondary goals.

The Portrait of a Graduate

High School, Leominster High School, Murdock High School, and several separate schools partnered with Mount Wachusett Community College for Early College programming.

These educators have the opportunity to better understand what is necessary for their graduates to become integrated and productive within their community, to find career fulfillment, or to become

I feel like it should be more explicitly designated that you're not teaching systems of equations for systems of equations, you're teaching them to show a step-by-step process"

– Emma Hughes

Opioid Crisis



Image from health.mil

First responders now have easier access to naxolone overdose reversal drugs like Narcan.

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would allow for supervised consumption sites to be opened up in Massachusetts. Dr. Alysse Wurcel of Tufts Medical Center, disappointed in the flat lining of opioid deaths in MA, said that supervised consumption sites are "probably one of the only things we can do to impact this trajectory."

On the other hand, U.S. Attorney Andrew Lellin said that he will use Federal Drug laws to prosecute anyone who opens one of these sites. Stopping supervised consumption sites doesn't seem like a valid way of trying to prevent deaths of American citizens, does it?

Having a loved one who

is addicted to opioids can be frustrating. Sometimes it seems that everything you do to help has no effect. I think a big mistake we make is trying to understand what is going through their heads. If you were never an addict, you can't know everything they go through mentally. But if you try your best to show them you love them and help them find the community that they are missing, this can go a long way. Constant support through treatment and everyday contact shows someone that you are determined to see how they are doing, and shows them that you care about them. Sometimes just that goes a long way to recovery.

Puzzle Corner

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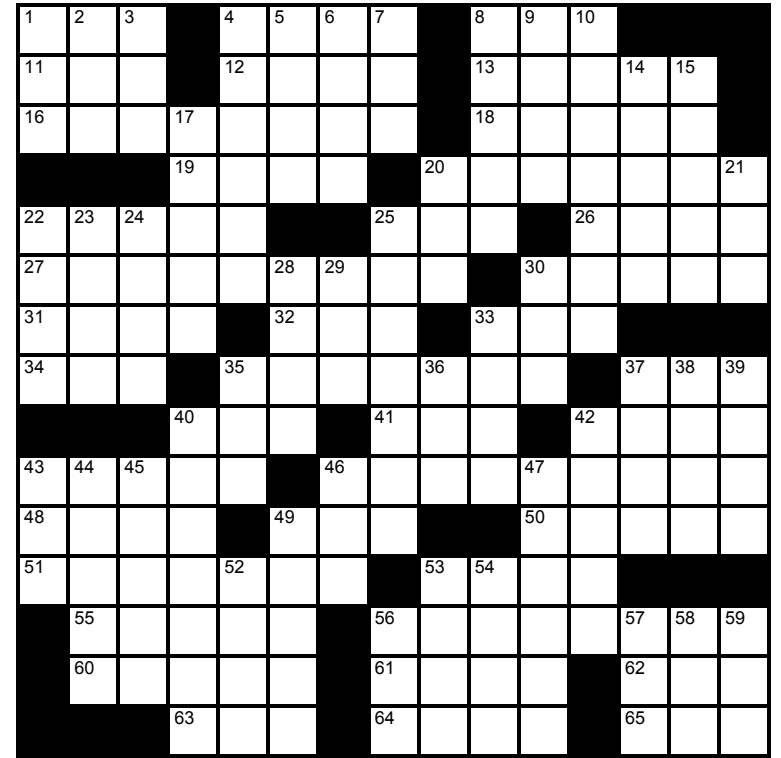
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The Status of *The Mount Observer* Going Forward...

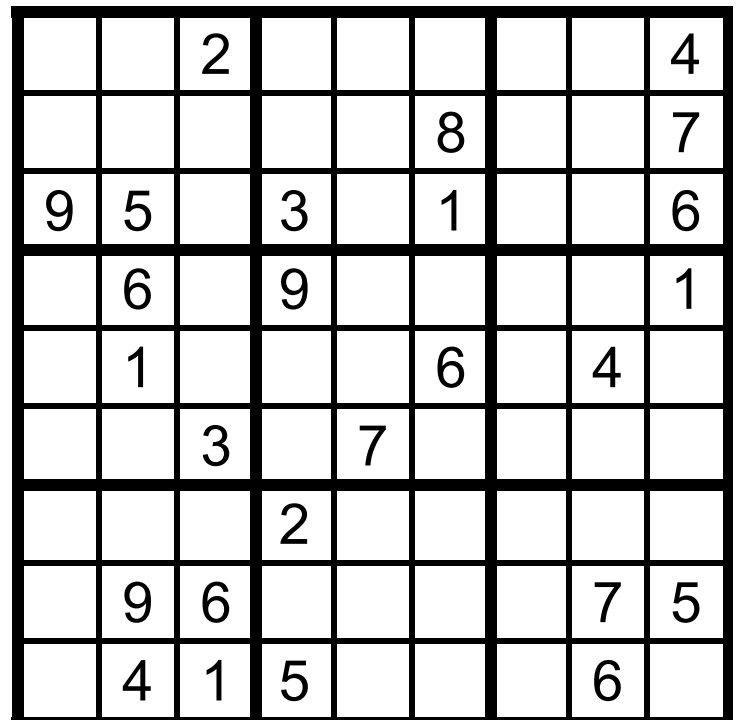
Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 novel coronavirus closing down all MWCC campuses to public use, we at *The Mount Observer* have decided to make the move to a fully online, web-only presence for the foreseeable future. If you would like to keep up with us and any articles, announcements, or issues that we have planned, feel free to check out our social media platforms:

- Website:** www.mountobserver.com
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Whatever the future holds, know that we plan to continue reporting “the voices of the students of Mount Wachusett Community College.”

Thank you for your support!

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, each row, column and box must contain the numbers 1 to 9. There is only one possible solution.



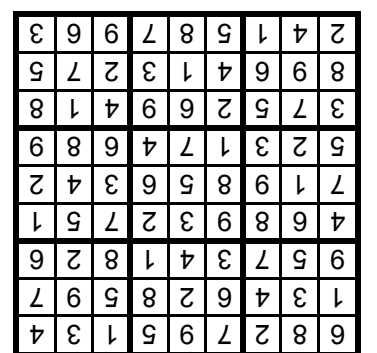
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Solution