

# The Mount Observer

“Voices of the students of Mount Wachusett Community College”

## Small Gifts are a Big Help

Dobby Sock Drive collects donations for local women’s shelter



Photo by Les Triconautas on Unsplash

By Maya Douglas

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

The Dobby Sock Drive will be held December 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> in the Student Center for anyone who wishes to give back as the holiday season approaches. According to Vanessa Roberto, president of the Parent Support Group, who is organizing the event, the socks will be donated to a local women’s shelter. Anyone who donates is eligible to win *Harry Potter*-themed prizes.

All proceeds will be donated to a local women’s shelter located in Leominster. The

program provides housing for recovering addicts and young single mothers. According to Roberto, when she met with some of the women at this shelter, they told her one thing they truly needed was socks. The shelter is very similar to a group home, so items, particularly clothing, frequently go missing or get stolen.

Roberto said that she was touched by this story and proposed the idea to her coworkers. She is calling the fundraiser the Dobby Sock

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“Sock Drive” >>>

## Becoming a Positive Bystander

Leadership training fosters a compassionate school community

By Maya Douglas

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Jason Zelesky, Dean of Students, recently led a Leadership for Life Bystander training in the Murphy Conference room. Zelesky said the goal of the program is to imagine a college campus community which uses its abilities to look out for others at all times. He said there is a need to build a strong, safe, and respectful community.

The Bystander Program has been able to make a difference and report concerns to invoke change. According to Zelesky, the program started six years ago because of an issue on campus. One student walked by another student who was crying in the hallway, and that student admitted that he/she was not okay.

Together, they walked to Zelesky’s office and the student received help. Zelesky said the student had planned to take his/her life that day, but thankfully

the bystander stepped in and changed the situation in a positive way.

One effective way to be a positive bystander is to walk around with your head up, making eye contact, and paying attention to your surroundings, Zelesky said. Many people walk around with phones, earbuds, or listening to music or texting.

“People are constantly occupied,” he said. “It is becoming more challenging to be a positive bystander.”

However, every day at least ten items end up in the lost and found. Zelesky said the beautiful thing is that our lost belongings get turned in rather than taken. There was only one incident of theft in the past year.

Zelesky has worked on five colleges and he said he has never seen that level of empathy on any other campus.

Zelesky said there is a culture

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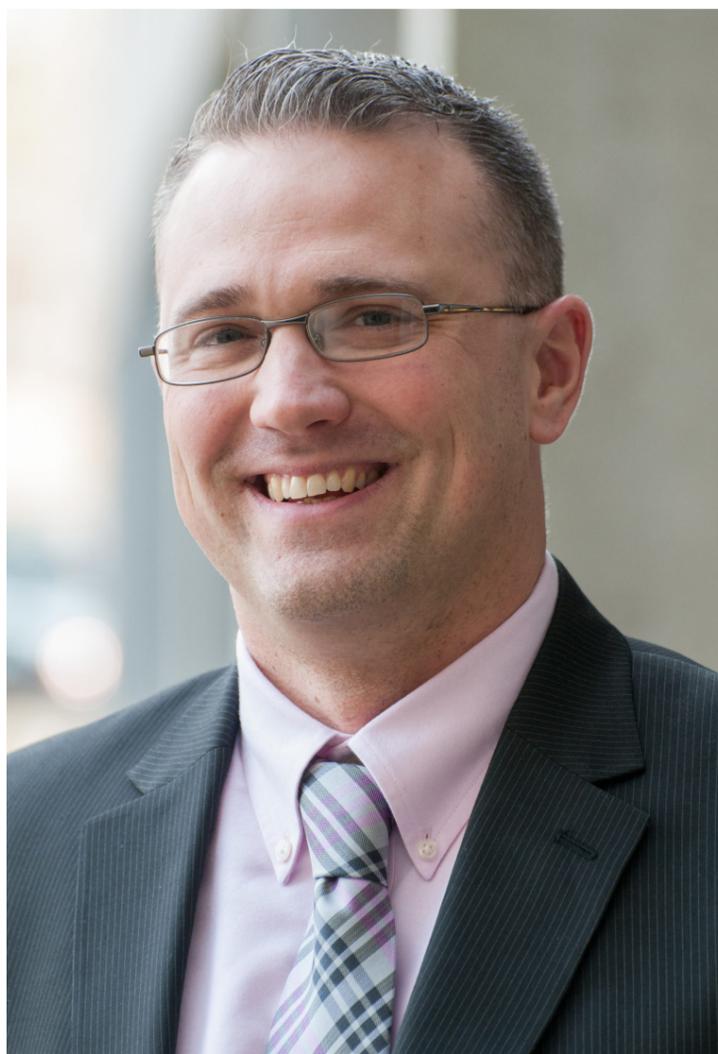


Photo courtesy of MWCC

Jason Zelesky, Dean of Students

### PREVIEWS



#### December Date Night

With the Holiday season approaching quickly, it can be difficult for some of us to justify spending boatloads of money on a night out with our significant other.

For the full article, see page 6

#### When Food Becomes A Weapon

Food allergies are a growing issue that calls for a lot of attention throughout the world.

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#### Let’s Get Physical

Fitness is particularly beneficial to college students seeking better overall health.

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#### Reviews

Check out our thoughts on Netflix’s latest offering, *Living with Yourself*, as well as the new book from YouTubers Rhett & Link, *The Lost Causes of Bleak Creek*

Full reviews on pages 6 & 7



# Sock Drive

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Drive because of the symbolism behind Dobby's character in the *Harry Potter* series. All Harry did was give Dobby a sock, but by doing so, he set Dobby free.

Roberto said it may seem like a little thing, but that small acts can have a huge effect on these others. She also said that socks are in high demand at these sober houses, and most of the women at the shelter cannot have jobs.

Roberto said these women are taking responsibility for their decisions and are now looking to improve their future. She has even seen some of them walking to their Alcoholics/Narcotics Anonymous meetings first thing in the morning and taking their babies with them because they cannot afford childcare.

"I personally think addiction is a disease," Roberto said. "A lot of people turn a blind eye to people who don't have a certain appeal." Roberto believes that if we show others we do not look down on people because of their struggles, it will help remove the stigma that addiction is a choice.

Roberto wants to bring in enough donations so that each of the women in the program

and their children can have two pairs of socks. She said too many people pass judgement and get caught up on the idea that they are donating their hard-earned money. She argues that people cannot possibly understand the struggles of others until they have gone through it themselves or lost everything just like these women have.

This fundraiser will consist of a raffle. Donating one pair of socks, both adult and/or for a small child, earns one ticket. A pack of socks earns five tickets and a donation of two packs receives ten tickets. Raffle tickets can also be purchased for cash donations: one for \$2, six for \$5, or twelve for \$10.

Roberto said that the college does a lot for the community, but she feels it is important to do something a little bit different and outside the box to help others.

"People are so quick to have empathy, but what are you doing to help them?" Roberto challenges. She said that it does not take much to simply be a nice person. Sometimes all it takes is one act of kindness to change the course of someone's life.

#### EDITOR'S NOTE:

The Parent Support Group was also mentioned last month in "The Triple Play," Volume 14, issue 3, page 4, and was incorrectly abbreviated to PSO. The correct abbreviation is PSG.

Additional corrections can also be found at [www.mountobserver.com/category/corrections/](http://www.mountobserver.com/category/corrections/)

# Bystanders

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of distraction which has now become normative. There is a lack of commitment to people, to each other. He said it is important to create a culture of positive bystanders, where people can learn to recognize a situation and intervene or help.

Zelesky discussed the bystander effect, which states that it is more common people for people to not help others in need. He said at times there is a psychological disconnect between doing the right thing and not doing the right thing because of uncertainty or the risk of embarrassment. Zelesky

challenges students to reject that mentality and help people for the sake of being good.

According to Zelesky, over 3,000 people walk in and out of the campus school doors Monday through Thursday. "We are like a small town," Zelesky said. He mentioned that almost half of the students have been sexually abused before coming to MWCC. He said knowing this statistic gives awareness, which allows students the opportunity to practice sensitivity on campus when it comes to these topics. Being a good bystander is knowing who is part of the community and how to react.

# Achieving Success with Accommodations

Disability Services helps students help themselves



Photo by Charles from Unsplash

Disability Services is a helpful resource for students with many different needs

By Hannah Bennett

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

As the end of the fall semester approaches, students are filing for their FAFSA and arranging their spring semester schedules. What students also have to do for next semester is renew their student accommodation forms.

Coordinator of Disability Services Amy Labarge is one of the two coordinators who works on campus with students with disabilities to aid them in achieving success at MWCC.

"Every student is entitled to equal access and opportunities in the classroom," said Labarge.

For a student's first set of accommodations, an appointment must be scheduled with one of the two coordinators, Labarge or Ann Reynolds. Labarge and Reynolds walk every student who comes to them through the accommodations process.

At the appointment, documentation of the student's disability dated within the last three years must be provided. This documentation must be either an Individualized Education Program (IEP) with evaluation, a 504 Plan, or documentation from a health care provider or specialist. If no documentation exists yet, Disability Services will provide a request form for a health care provider to fill out and send back to them.

After documentation is presented, a coordinator will have a conversation with the student about what they might need in terms of accommodations over the course of the semester. Learning style is discussed as well as self-advocating.

"We try to help them become self-advocating in the process," said Labarge.

The types of accommodations students can qualify for include extended time on tests and quizzes, a low distraction setting

their coordinator of the change with new documentation.

"If something changes, they should come down and tell us," said Labarge.

Accommodation letters are picked up by students upon their completion, within a few days after their appointment with one of the coordinators. Students then go to each of their teachers for signatures and provide one copy to each teacher.

"It's a student-driven process," said Labarge. "Students can apply

#### To Schedule Appointments with Disability Services:

**Amy Labarge, M.Ed.: 978-630-9330**

**alabarge@mwcc.mass.edu**

**Room 142, Gardner Campus**

**Ann Reynolds, B.S.: 978-630-9190**

**areynolds1@mwcc.mass.edu**

**Room 143, Gardner Campus**

for academics, audio recordings of lectures, five minute breaks, preferential seating, and more. These accommodations last for a semester until classes change and new accommodations are needed.

For any accommodations after the first set, an email can be set to either Labarge or Reynolds including a student's request and the next semester's class schedule. If a student's diagnosis changes, the student should then make an appointment to inform

for accommodations anytime, but preferably at the start of each semester. It's better to put them in place in the beginning of the semester, so you don't need them and wish you had them."

Some students may be self-conscious about their disabilities and not want to fully disclose them to their professors.

"The teacher only knows the student is involved with our office and has accommodations

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"Accommodations" >>>

## OPINION

# Climate Change: Should We be Worried?

## Professor Montagno offers his expertise on climate change



Photo by Ryan Lyesiuk

Professor Thomas Montagno

By Ryan Lyesiuk

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Is climate change real? Are we experiencing global warming at this very moment? If so, is there anything we can do to reverse this process? Professor Thomas Montagno provides his expert opinion on these questions.

According to Montagno, climate change is a reality, with the warmest global temperatures ever recorded in the month of

October in 2019. Montagno stated, “In the last ten years we have recorded the highest temperatures worldwide in recorded history.”

“CO2 levels have risen significantly since the advent of the industrial revolution.” Montagno added.

CO2 levels increased from 260 parts per million in the 1850’s to 407 parts per million as of 2019, according to planet.com.

Are humans contributing to climate change? According to Montagno, we absolutely are a major factor in climate change, with “our insistence on primarily burning fossil fuels for energy.” According to Montagno, we need to utilize the sun more for fuel, relying less on fossil fuels. Burning fossil fuels releases greenhouse gases such as methane and carbon dioxide, which are capable of damaging the ozone layer and polluting the environment.

According to Montagno, there are other human factors contributing to climate change. Montagno said, “cattle production, specifically the beef industry, should be reduced to slow the increase of methane gas in the atmosphere.” Eating a higher plant-based diet is one course of action individuals can take to help the environment.

“Beef requires lots of feed and water and produce lots of methane,” said Montagno. Since people have consumed beef for many years, and will always desire more, a total ban on beef is not practical, according to Montagno.

Driving and flying less are other options to reduce the

consumption of fossil fuels. Another way to help slow climate change is gathering more fuel from the sun, and less from fossil fuels, according to Montagno.

When asked about nature’s course causing climate change, Montagno said, “there may be some truth, but the rise in sea levels in the last 200 years shows it’s more.” Montagno followed by stating, “We can’t deny CO2 levels and temperatures have increased dramatically.”

**“In the last ten years we have recorded the highest temperatures worldwide in recorded history.”**

**– Professor Thomas Montagno**

In reality, it doesn’t matter what is causing climate change, the fact is that it’s happening now, and we need to act, according to Montagno. As world leaders, the United States needs to send a clear message that the time to act is now, if it’s not already too late.

“We could be doing much more,” said Montagno. With any

luck, there is still hope, but we do not know the answer to that at this time, Montagno said.

There are several measures students can take to help in the effort to combat climate change, according to Montagno. Actions include: writing to legislature, joining the Citizen Climate Lobby, investing in renewable energy, eating locally, and consuming less meat. Montagno stated, “students should strive to live sustainable,” including using less plastics and recycling whenever possible.

Montagno stated his top concerns with climate change include, “rising sea levels, an increase in extreme storms, and more flooding to rivers.” When you piece it all together, it’s tough to deny climate change is real, according to Montagno.

Professor Montagno received his PHD in Horticulture at the Ohio State University in 1991. He immediately began teaching at the college level in Ohio, Virginia, and Massachusetts. Montagno has been a part of the MWCC staff for 16 years. He currently teaches Biology, Weather and Climate, Plants and Society, and Global Environmental Issues.

# When Food Becomes a Weapon

## Student sheds light on food allergy bullying

By Hannah Bennett

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Food allergies are a growing issue that calls for a lot of attention throughout the world. And while the allergy itself can be difficult and dangerous to deal with, there are children with food allergies that not only have to worry about the foods they are allergic to, but people who would intentionally harm them using those foods.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “food allergies are a

growing food safety and public health concern that affect an estimated 8% of children in the United States. That’s 1 in 13 children, or about 2 students per classroom... The prevalence of food allergies among children increased 50% between 1997–2011, and allergic reactions to foods have become the most common cause of anaphylaxis in community health settings.”

In terms of awareness towards food allergies, many groups, such

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“Food Allergies” >>>



Photo by Evan-Amos from Vanamo Media

One of the more commonly known food allergies is peanuts; and, subsequently, peanut butter

# Life is a Balancing Act

## A student's perspective on juggling work, school, and family

By **Brandon Feliz**

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

As the school year continues, some students find it difficult to juggle schoolwork, social life, at-home responsibilities, and work at the same time. Time management becomes a major factor in order to succeed, but time management is a skill that is not taught in school.

For some of the students here at Mount Wachusett Community College, having no time even with time management skills on their side is a harsh reality. Take the life of 20-year-old Tatiana Martinez. Martinez is a nursing student who works as a receptionist with a steady income. Before reaching this point in life, however, she was a student who worked a total of four jobs in order to support herself and her loved ones.

"I felt tired all the time because I'd be working all types of hours from 6:00 a.m. to 11:30 p.m.,"



Photo by Andrew Neel from Unsplash

Life can get crazy balancing multiple jobs, home life, and school

said Martinez.

Working so much out of necessity can not only be physically draining, but mentally as well. Thankfully, Martinez said she has a go-getter attitude that got her through all the hardships.

"It did give me a motivated rush being able to manage it all, as well as just remembering all of my job requirements when going from one job to another," said Martinez. "I feel really proud of myself looking back."

But even getting from one job to another was an issue. "It was annoying and made me feel a little uneasy having to figure out how to get from one job to another, especially on time with no car," said Martinez.

Being out of uniform can also be an issue while working multiple jobs, and can lead to being sent home or even being fired. "It was more overwhelming making sure I had the right attire

for each job, considering they all had an employee uniform," said Martinez. "Not having everything included in your ensemble was frowned upon and sometimes unacceptable, especially in a corporate business."

Martinez said that she later made it a priority to "build up more confidence" after learning that confidence promotes better work, both in school and the job field.

"I took it upon myself to build up more work-load management, time management, social skills and people management while going to school and working in the food and customer service industries," she said.

After going through what seems an everyday struggle, Martinez finally found the time to breathe, knowing that after going this far, the sky is the limit.

# Food Allergies

>>> continued from page 3

as the CDC, provide information on how best to treat them and prevent exposure to them. Other groups formed online to further educate those uninformed about food allergies, and those who die because of them.

One such site is a blog called, "Remembering Those We Have Lost to Food Allergies," run by Lisa Rutter.

"I would like to take this time and remember some of the recent and not so recent deaths that have occurred from food allergies," wrote Rutter. "These are just some of the reported cases. It is very sad that there have been so many and yet we have not heard about most of them."

According to Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE), "about one-third of kids with food allergies report that they have been bullied because of their allergies."

I myself have experience with

this kind of harassment. I have several food allergies, most of which are life threatening. Throughout my time in my elementary school, I was met with students who either did not understand my allergies or found them "funny."

One of the most prevalent instances I remember when classmates tried to hurt me was when they replaced my allergen free sandwich with a peanut butter sandwich.

I opened the Ziplock bag, and the smell was enough to make me feel sick. I didn't eat the sandwich and saw my classmates laugh at me as I sat there. There were many other instances before and after this.

What discouraged me at the time not only the cruelty of my classmates, but the lack of action from my teachers and school administration. I told them and my parents about the first several incidents, and nothing came of it. A report was never filed,

and my classmates were never reprimanded for their actions. I grew up thinking what they were doing was more acceptable than my medical condition. I had no idea what they did was a crime until I was a teenager.

According to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, "(a) No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States, as defined in

but one in particular relates to my experiences: "a local educational agency... system of vocational education, or other school system." By federal law, no public education system, like my elementary school, can allow discrimination based on a disability.

Harassment and bullying well qualify as a form of discrimination and should

those who allow it to happen can be sued for negligence among other things.

Food allergies are a disability, and one that can kill.

The issue remains as a detrimental and necessary topic of discussion when it comes to the welfare of our populace and the safety of students in schools. FARE, CDC, and personal accounts from people with food

**Throughout my time in my elementary school, I was met with students who either did not understand my allergies or found them "funny."**

**– Hannah Bennett**

section 7(20), shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance"

Several examples are included,

therefore have been and should be in the future addressed as such an offense. Yet dozens of people are faced with this form of harassment every year. Because of the federal laws in place, people can be met with criminal charges for engaging in this kind of harassment and

allergies are great articles you can use to educate yourself on how to best help those with food allergies and prevent reactions. All anyone has to do to become more aware of food allergies and their impact is to take the time to read them.

# Let's Get Physical

## Fitness Center director discusses benefits of exercise for students

By Ryan Lyesiuk

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Fitness is particularly beneficial to college students seeking better overall health. According to Jason Snoonian, director of the Mount Wachusett Community College Fitness & Wellness Center (also called the Mount Fitness Center), improved health often leads to better classroom performance.

According to Snoonian, increased brain stimulation during exercise may assist a student in and out of the classroom.

"Exercise and increased fitness often leads to better study habits, better-quality sleep, significant overall health advances, and improved confidence," he said.

Between school, work, and other obligations it can be challenging to find time to exercise. Thirty minutes a day, a few days a week, is all you need to see significant health benefits from exercise, according to Snoonian. "Four to six exercises for fifteen minutes, followed by

fifteen minutes of cardio is a perfect starting point," he said.

Gradually increasing workouts to sixty minutes maximum is a great way to approach fitness, but not needed to reap the benefits of exercise, according to Snoonian. "More than sixty minutes leads to burnout in most individuals, particularly those who are new to fitness," Snoonian said.

The Mount Fitness Center offers over seventy classes per week, all with certified group fitness education and CPR trained staff. These classes are free to all members of the Mount Fitness Center. Regarding which classes students should participate in, Snoonian said, "students should try every class if possible, and if not start with Group Ride, Centergy, Yoga, or Fight." Snoonian recommends these specific classes for two reasons: they are fun, and seem to be popular with young adults.

In regards to the time of year students typically join the Mount Fitness Center, Snoonian said, "there's definitely an increase



Photo by Thomas Hill Jr.

MWCC Fitness & Wellness Center

in the fall. The big rush comes in mid-September once students get their acts together in school." Snoonian also mentioned a slight increase in students in January, but noted the New Year's resolution crowd is mostly older adults, not students.

Students might wonder what to expect upon joining the Mount Fitness Center. According to Snoonian, students will receive a friendly welcome from all the staff. He said, "we have top notch equipment available to all members, and the best class experience around."

According to Snoonian, the Mount Fitness Center is the perfect location for students

attending MWWC at the Gardner Campus. "The Mount Fitness Center is the cheapest around for students, has more to offer, over 70 classes, olympic size pool, and trained personal trainers/staff," Snoonian said, "it's the best game in town."

Prices at the Mount Fitness Center for students are set at \$49 a semester or \$99 for an entire calendar year, plus a two-month promotional bonus. A free equipment orientation is offered to all new members as well. Snoonian also said "anyone seeking a personal trainer to help get them on the right track can purchase a tri-pack for \$99." This package includes three one-

hour sessions, at a cost of only \$33 per meeting. This is a great deal for students, according to Snoonian.

Snoonian has over 22-years of work experience in the fitness industry. He received his Bachelor of Science (BS) degree at the University of Massachusetts. Upon completing his BS degree Snoonian worked as a personal trainer in multiple fitness clubs before becoming the director of the Westboro Club for 12 years. In March 2018, Snoonian left Westboro to take over as the director of the Mount Fitness Center.

# Nutrition with a Mission

## Staff suggestions for eating well at school

By Ryan Lyesiuk

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Healthy nutritional habits in a college student's life often lead to improved overall health, according to Katherine R. Kusza, Registered Nurse at MWCC.

According to Kusza, a healthy diet consists of a balanced nutritional intake, including a blend of fruits, vegetables, grains, protein, and low-fat dairy products. Reducing your overall calorie intake by eating smaller portions and more frequent meals is important as well in maintaining a healthy diet.

Kusza provided a sample of a balanced meal from ChooseMyPlate.gov. The meal

includes half a plate of fruits and vegetables, half a plate of grains and proteins, and one serving of milk.

ChooseMyPlate.gov provides other diet tips as well. Tips included sticking with low-fat dairy products, incorporating more fiber, consuming additional whole grains, eating fewer fatty foods, and avoiding excess salt.

What other advice does Kusza provide? "Drinking more water and less sugary drinks is an important as well," along with, "avoiding too much caffeine, especially after 12 p.m." Avoiding soda, energy drinks, and alcohol is key to maintaining a healthy diet as well. Following

these tips will reduce sugar and calorie intake, thus leading to a healthier overall diet, according to Kusza.

The Food for Thought pantry on campus is an excellent source of snacks, prepackaged meals, and other miscellaneous foods for students in need, according to Kusza. Students are referred by a faculty or staff member, or they can refer themselves if needed. The pantry is open on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays from 10 a.m.-2 p.m., and Wednesdays from 4-6 p.m.

Students are allowed to receive up to 20 items per month and are encouraged to supply their own bag or reuse the pantry bag

provided to them. Kusza said, "donations are always welcomed at the pantry as well."

The Green Street Café located on the first floor of the main building at the Gardner campus provides several healthy food alternatives, according to Kyle Legrand, Assistant Manager of the café. Nutritional foods offered at the café include salads, fruit, yogurt, and cereal. Healthy drink options include water, unsweetened fresh tea, coffee without added sugar, low-fat milk, and V8 energy drinks, according to Legrand.

"The café strives for local, organic options, while keeping prices down," stated Legrand.

Green Street Café is not subsidized by the state, thus keeping food at a price that is reasonable to students, but allows the café to break even, according to Legrand.

When Legrand was asked the most popular healthy choice made by students he said, "definitely the salads."

When asked what was the most popular less healthy foods purchased by students, Legrand stated, "the chicken tenders, burgers, and french fries." Soda, which contains a large amount of sugar, is a popular beverage option among the students as well, according to Legrand.

# December Date Night

## Student's tips for seasonal fun on a budget



Photo by Ian Stauffer from Unsplash

Light up your date nights with a Christmas light show

By Marissa Shea

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

With the Holiday season approaching quickly, it can be difficult for some of us to justify spending boatloads of money on a night out with our significant other. There are holiday dinners to attend, gifts to give, and expenses to be paid. If you are looking to take your significant other on a romantic night out without breaking the bank, this is the article for you. It will discuss three date ideas, at three different price points, at varying travel times.

The first date idea is the cheapest and most local. Every year in Gardner at 509 West St, there is a magical Christmas light show with hundreds of colorful lights going to the beat of music. After you tune your car radio to 87.9 FM, you will be blown away by how much effort the homeowners put into the light show.

Every inch of the house is

covered in Christmas lights that are programed to flicker on and off to music. The homeowners use a good mix of classic Christmas music and top radio hits, so it gives everyone a chance to sing along.

Each light show usually lasts around thirty minutes. This is a perfect holiday activity to do with your significant other, and the best part is it's completely free. If you have a few extra dollars to spare after, try one of Gardner's local gems, Sawa Asian Cuisine and Lounge. They have great food for reasonable prices and have a 4.5 rating on Google Reviews.

The second date idea is also free, but it is a little more of a drive. It is a huge light show called Millis Wonderland, located on 60 Causeway St. in Millis. I have been to this lightshow ever since I was little, and it will always be my favorite.

When you visit, you drive down the homeowner's long driveway, which is filled with

elaborate Christmas decorations such as Santa with his elves and reindeer. There is often classic Christmas music playing and an array of Christmas lights and trees.

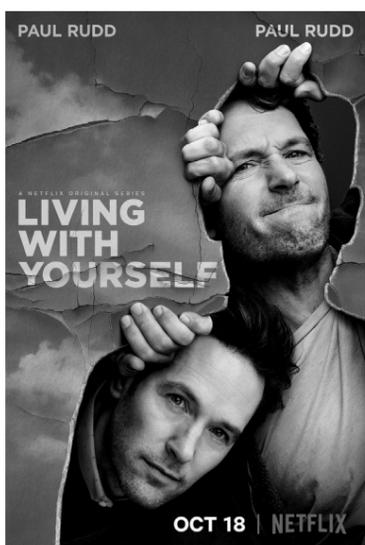
Driving through the exhibit takes about fifteen minutes but there is often traffic, so it could possibly take longer. No matter how cold it is outside, you get to stay cozy in your warm car. If you are looking to go out to dinner afterwards, there is an Italian restaurant called Primavera right nearby with a reasonably priced menu and a 4.2 on Google Reviews.

The third date idea is the furthest away and most expensive, the Tree Lighting Festival at the Boston Common Visitors Center, located at 139 Tremont St. in Boston. There, you and your significant other can walk around and enjoy the beautifully festive city. The event itself is free but keep in

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"Date Night" >>>

# Cloning Around with Paul Rudd

## Review: *Living With Yourself*



By Nicholas Papini  
Observer Contributor

In a world where genetics and cloning are advanced and common enough that the FDA has a division dedicated to related crimes, Paul Rudd delivers an

emotional tale of the bitterness and depression that settles into a person in their mundane life.

*Living with Yourself* is a new Netflix show released on October 19. It contains 8 episodes of approximately 38 minutes for a total of 215 minutes. The show is created and written by Timothy Greenberg and stars Paul Rudd and Aisling Bea.

In an interview with *The Hollywood Reporter*, when questioned about his inspirations, Greenberg said, "We should be the best versions of ourselves with the ones we love the most, but we often are not. Why is that?" To that end, the show attempts to demonstrate what would happen if a person was either suddenly replaced by or confronted with a version of themselves which is as near to

perfect as possible.

In *Living with Yourself*, an aging and depressed Miles Elliot (Paul Rudd) feels that he has nothing in his life going for him. His marriage is falling apart, his job is in jeopardy, and he can't seem to find the energy to do anything to improve it. When his coworker suggests he go to a day spa, he finds that he has nothing left to lose.

The unique episode layout, with episodes alternately following the lives of each of the clones of Miles Davis, is rather brilliant and gives the show a style all to itself. This style leads to some fascinating cinematography and camera movements as scenes are viewed from different characters' viewpoints.

Paul Rudd faces a unique position in *Living with Yourself*.

He must act as two separate and distinct versions of the same character, Miles Elliot. He rises to the challenge in a rather remarkable way, making each version feel like a fully fleshed out person. They have the same experiences, but the way each feels and reacts is entirely unique, and Rudd gets that across perfectly. However, some fans of Paul Rudd's previous works may be disappointed to see him play a much more serious role than they are used to.

Aisling Bea's performance as Kate Elliot is stunning, although her character clearly had to be tailored to suit her strong Irish accent. This does not in any way detract from the story nor the character, but it's worth noting that she likely does not have a good handle on American

accents.

Tom Brady appears briefly in the first episode to make what is certainly a rather infamous cameo. His character has previously used the spa's services six times, once for each of his Superbowl titles.

What *Living with Yourself* misses on, it more than makes up for in its unique charm and bold direction. It avoids the obvious pitfall of outlandish comedy, which Paul Rudd has regularly acted in before, and instead takes a wacky concept and deals with related emotional impact.

With excellent acting, a fun plot, and a unique take on the science fiction genre, *Living with Yourself* is certainly not the worst thing that can be binged on Netflix.

# The Lost Causes of Bleak Creek

## Review of YouTube duo's first YA novel

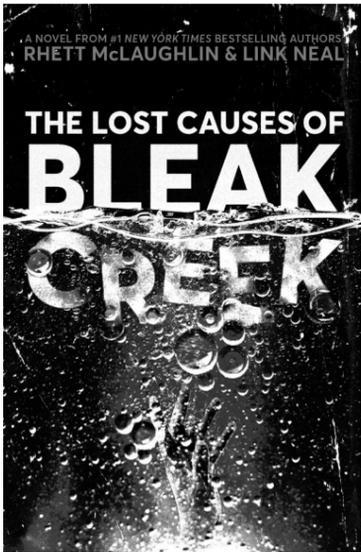


Image from Amazon

*The Lost Causes of Bleak Creek*

By Nicholas Papini

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

While the characters and overarching plot of *The Lost Causes of Bleak Creek* are solid, where the novel truly shines is in its minor characters and moments of world building.

Youtubers Rhett McLaughlin and Link Neal of the channel Good Mythical Morning's first foray into fiction novels follows the story of two teens in the fictional South Carolina town of Bleak Creek. The small town has a rather famous local business which claims to reform

troubled children and has an impressive resume with very few failures. However, as teens Rex McClendon and Leif Nelson learn, not all is as it seems with the Whitewood School.

The plot of *The Lost Causes of Bleak Creek* is very solid, if rather derivative. It isn't necessarily bad, but it is not particularly unique. In many ways it is reminiscent of other teen detective stories like *Stranger Things* or even *Scooby Doo*. The story doesn't detract from the overall quality of the novel, but it doesn't make it stand out either.

The minor aspects of *The Lost Causes of Bleak Creek* are the stand outs. The town of Bleak Creek is colorful and well defined. It perfectly encapsulates the friendliness of the small-town South and also the way that same friendliness will die very quickly if a person does not fit into their world view. The idea of the Whitewood School which would take in and reform "lost causes" is uniquely suited to the environment the town creates.

When interviewed by Audible, Rhett and Link were asked where the inspiration for their book

came from. Regarding the town, Rhett said, "this is true all over the world, but there's a certain flavor to the expectations of the small-town South and we knew how to conform and succeed in a way and be looked at in a way that the adults would feel like we were respectable young boys."

*The Lost Causes of Bleak Creek* marks authors Rhett McLaughlin and Link Neal's first attempt to write both the supernatural, mystery, and fiction genres, and it does not truly show. The book is well polished with a multitude of interesting and unique characters and a fun world surrounding them.

It sometimes feels like the writing goes off on a tangent about certain aspects of the world. They sometimes feel strange and break up the pacing of the book. The greatest issue is the novel's rather weak prose, but for a young adult novel there are certainly worse.

*The Lost Causes of Bleak Creek* is a coming of age story set in a backdrop of a 90s supernatural mystery. It may not be the best of its kind at any of those things, but it is overall a fun novel and a fantastic first for Rhett and Link.

## Accommodations

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listed on the form," said Labarge. "It's up to the student to disclose more if they want to."

According to the accommodations form issued to students at MWCC, "the implementation of the following accommodations is a requirement by law to promote academic success." Does this mean all professors have to follow the accommodations sent to them?

"Yes, by law, if it's been approved by [Disability Services]," said Labarge.

Appointments with Disability Services can be scheduled over the phone (978-630-9330 for Labarge and 978-630-9190 for Reynolds), via email, or in person in rooms 142 or 143 on the Gardner campus.

"We have an open door policy," said Labarge. "Come in for any question or concern... We like to get to know our students. Let us know when you're doing well or struggling at all."

Disability Services are applicable to more students than one might think. "About

25% of students [at MWCC] qualify [for accommodations]," said Labarge. There is also an honor society, Delta Alpha Pi, led by Labarge and Reynolds for students with disabilities. The honor society promotes awareness towards disabilities, services for them, and self help for those with disabilities.

"I'm really passionate about helping students do the best they can," said Labarge. "It's very exciting to see students achieve personal growth and academic success."

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Meeting Times:  
Wednesdays  
12:30PM – 1:30PM

## Date Night

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previous page

mind you will have to pay for transportation there and back.

This year, the tree lighting will be held on Thursday, December 5<sup>th</sup>, with festivities beginning at 6:00 pm. The lights will be lit just before 8:00 pm. You can walk through over 50 acres of the Boston Common, and there will be free entertainment and appearances from Santa.

Instead of driving and paying for parking, it is easier to take the MBTA Fitchburg train into Boston. The train will cost you and your significant other around

\$50 round trip. You can also save a few dollars by driving to the Alewife MBTA station in Cambridge and taking the red line into Boston.

If you are looking for a bite to eat, after the tree lighting, head to Mike's Pastries in the North End. I can promise you will not be sorry. They specialize in cannoli and have a 4.5 on Google Reviews.

Even if you don't have a significant other, don't worry. You can still share these fun activities with a group of friends. Enjoy your holiday season!

### Want to see your art in print?

Send scans or photos of your best pieces to  
mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu

OR

Come visit us in person in room 344

# Back Page Showcase



Featured this month: Photography by Betsy Torres (Photos taken in Greenfield, MA)

# OPEN MIC

Wednesday, December 11  
12:30-1:30  
in the North Cafeteria



**READ YOUR ORIGINAL  
POEMS, STORIES & ESSAYS  
FREE PIZZA ... WHILE IT LASTS**

For More Information, Contact:

*Michelle Valois / ext 364*  
*m\_valois@mwcc.mass.edu*

Each student will have about five minutes of mic time—depending on how many students show up and want to read. Arrive early to sign up.

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