

The Mount Observer

“Voices of the students of Mount Wachusett Community College”

PREVIEWS



“Will We Ever Work Again?”

Since the arrival of COVID-19, the biggest casualty in the local music industry has been live performances. The question local musicians have been asking is, “Will we ever work again?”

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Collegiate Conundrum

Student athletes at the college level have been facing many challenges ever since the COVID-19 pandemic started back in March.

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Reviews:

The Mandalorian and WandaVision

See what we thought of Mando and “Baby Yoda’s” latest adventures, as well as Marvel’s new sitcom featuring their original odd couple.

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Are Apples Enough?

Fewer patients in central Massachusetts are seeking medical assistance out of concern for COVID-19.

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LACE Up Your Shoes

MWCC’s LACE Program Trudges on Despite the Pandemic



Photo courtesy of MWCC

Shelley Nicholson, Director of the Brewer Center for Civic Learning & Community Engagement

By Yamari David

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

The Civic Engagement and Community Leadership Liberal Arts Track (LACE) is a program that allows students to receive their associate degree while learning how to be civically involved within the community.

The program has proved to be successful even with the volunteering aspect before and through Covid-19.

There are many volunteering opportunities students have for the LACE program offered at Mount Wachusett Community College. Despite Covid-19 putting a damper on a lot of things, there still has been a good variety of things students can do to volunteer.

According to Shelly Nicholson, the Director of the Brewer Center for Civic Learning & Community Engagement, students have been working with Habitat for Humanity where they have been growing produce at home and donating it to the food pantries. Students have also been participating with LUK Mentoring for middle and high school students mostly in the

Fitchburg and Leominster area, where they can mentor and tutor younger students virtually.

Alyssa’s Place is a peer recovery and resource center in Gardner, Massachusetts. It is for people who are dealing with substance abuse, recovery, loved ones affected by addiction, and concerned members of the community. A student worked with the center and they were able to be trained to do virtual counseling with people who were in drug or alcohol recovery. This is an example of the kind of volunteer work students can do virtually and still have as great of an impact in comparison to doing it in person.

Covid-19 in some ways has helped the program become stronger. “We’ve had a lot of opportunities that are evolving, and the summer was really the key to making that happen,”

Nicholson says. “Everybody kind of realized that okay, we are in this for the long haul; let’s think about how we do things and how we can make it better.”

There is a setlist of courses students have to take to complete the program. One of the featured courses in the program is called “The Business of Social Change” which pairs with the course called “Grant Writing”. These are cycle one and two classes that correspond with each other.

“The courses themselves are more like an independent study because I am trying to get students thinking about what they can do and what impact they can have,” says Elmer Eubanks, who teaches both of these courses at MWCC. It is designed for students to

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LACE Program >>>

Of Computers and Childcare

The ECE Program is Refashioned for Virtual Care

By Jordan Paskell

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

The Early Childhood Education program requires students meet set practicum hours to graduate. To felicitate this requirement, several standards have been changed and the system has changed so that virtual work can be counted as practicum hours. Maureen Provost, Professor of Early Childhood Education at the Garrison Center on the Gardner campus, and Dr. Thomas Linehan, Assistant Professor of Early Childhood Education, shares how COVID

has impacted students in the ECE program as well.

“Because of regulations, we are not holding any classes in the lab. We are also unable to place practicum students in the daycare center,” said Provost. “My colleagues in early education and I continue to work virtually with our students. Students have access to recordings and are able to record their feedback/work and submit online,” said Provost.

According to Linehan, ECE students are required to complete 150 practicum hours to complete their ECE degree.

This portion of the degree requirements provides students with the privilege to observe children’s daily routines such as eating, learning and playing. It also shows them behaviors and proper caretaking. Students are now observing these methods via virtual platforms according to Provost.

“The Massachusetts Department of ECE developed new temporary guidelines for practicum students in our early childhood programs,” said Linehan. “They changed the total practicum hours from 150 hours to 75 hours and

allowed early childhood faculty to supervise students through video instead of face-to-face. Also, the number of site visits required went from three face-to-face to two virtual,” said Linehan. “It’s not perfect, but we’re pushing students through,” said Provost.

Both healthcare and education are in high demand, and now students need to be pushed through more than ever. However, due to the complexity and safety regulations behind childcare and healthcare, these

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Early Childhood Education” >>>

LACE Program Trying Times Ahead

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formulate ideas for businesses and think about how they can give back to the community with those businesses.

The grant writing course comes after students have developed their business ideas. Eubanks says, "Now you can write a proposal to request funds for the project that you just wrote about in the business of social change class." The course provides students with what they need to include when writing a proposal for their business concept, such as researching foundations for their particular business according to Eubanks.

MWCC has a partnership with the Stephen M. Brewer Center. This Center was created to allow students to become involved in the democratic process, engage within the community, and challenge themselves with equality issues through service and volunteer work. The Center was created in 2001, but at this time the LACE program did not exist yet. It wasn't until 2015 when LACE was introduced

according to Dan Soucy, the Faculty Chair of Civic Engagement.

The idea behind it, Soucy mentioned, is that the Brewer Center would help to provide the "how-to" behind civics, but they did not have the "know-how" aspect of it and that is where the LACE program comes in.

The idea with this program is that once students are enrolled, they will partake in general education studies such as math, science, and humanities. While studying these core classes, they are simultaneously learning how to become a civic leader. No specific major or any idea of a major is needed to be involved in the program.

The LACE program has been established in a way where every student can have the opportunity to participate in the program regardless of their major. "It is going to take many different majors such as business majors, philosophy majors, and biology majors to be civically involved in our community," says Soucy.

Early Childhood Education

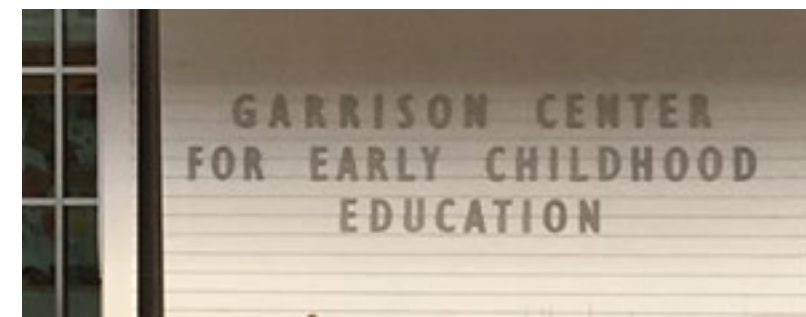


Photo by Thomas Hill Jr.

The MWCC Garrison Center for Early Childhood Education

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programs still must meet regional and national accreditation standards for students to pass according to MWCC President Vander Hooven.

"Achieving a set number of clinical hours as dictated by accreditation standards is not something we can alter or amend in any way. Students must have those clinical hours in order to successfully complete their degrees and enter the workforce," said Vander Hooven.

Maureen Provost shared a positive note for ECE students. "In good news, because of the

hard work of our Pathways grant coordinator; Jonie Latimer Brady, and her grant team, we have new furnishings in the lab for when we come back," she said. Provost has also purchased the furnishings for the new parent center through another grant.

President Vander Hooven leaves off on a positive note for next year; "Frankly, my hopes for the future is that we continue to grow more optimistic about the vaccines in development and that, by the summer of 2021, we might be back to a level of "new" normalcy."

Homeless Shelters Struggle Under New COVID Restrictions



Photo by Jon Tyson on Unsplash

Due to restrictions caused by COVID-19, the number of beds available for use in many homeless shelters has been reduced.

By Dylan Quigley

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Homelessness in Massachusetts has been a focal point of the community for a few decades now, and the perspective towards people experiencing homelessness that organizations like The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community (AMC) and Our Father's House Incorporated have is that we as a community should try to help the people in our community who need the extra help. The Sexuality and Gender Alliance club at Mount Wachusett Community College has also teamed up with local charities to help.

and having to follow CDC guidelines all shelters had to cut the amount of beds that they are able to offer, so everybody is distanced safely. Now that winter is here, shelters are short on beds and space. According to the Executive Office for Health and Human Services, the Department of Housing and Community Development will be providing \$37 million to homeless service agencies across the state to expand space or rent/lease hotel and motel rooms during these winter months.

The pandemic has also impacted how homeless shelters give out as much of that as we can this time of year." The Sexuality and Gender Alliance(SAGA) club has teamed up with the Montachusett Veteran's Outreach Center in Gardner to deliver well needed items for homeless vets in the area. Operation Airdrop was SAGA's way of helping out. They created a COVID-19 friendly way of donating; where you purchase items through Amazon's Gift Registry and the items are sent directly to the Montachusett Veteran's Outreach Center on 268 Central Street in Gardner. Items include socks, hats, gloves, dental hygiene

items, personal protection equipment, and backpacks. "They served for our country and risked their lives for our rights, comforts, and freedoms," said President of SAGA Paige Landry. "We appreciate all that they have done, and this is why we wanted to help these people

"We appreciate all that they have done, and this is why we wanted to help these people when they needed it."

-Paige Landry, SAGA President

As the temperature drops, those who may or may not have shelter every night definitely benefit from the work that these organizations are doing. With winter now in full swing, many people experiencing homelessness are seeking shelter. This is revealing a problem all shelters are having.

With the COVID-19 pandemic

the AMC Fitchburg chapter has had an annual warm clothing drive, but they had to cancel their clothing drive this year because of the pandemic. In more normal years, Furqan Mehmud, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Leader in Fitchburg, said, "Well, they are the ones outside in the cold, they need warm clothes and blankets more, so we like to

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There's Scamming Afoot

Many MA Residents Have Fallen Victim to Unemployment Scams



By Cheryl Locksley-Grant

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

If you're lucky enough to still be working, crooks can create havoc for you. Across Massachusetts, employees are being targeted by scammers to file fraudulent unemployment claims using their personal identifications. The problem became so severe that the Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) of Massachusetts issued a press release on May 27. This communication notified employers statewide that every employee in their company was vulnerable to fraudulent jobless claims.

James Grayson, an employee at a Cambridge Biotech firm, said, "When an email popped up in my inbox saying to immediately contact my Human Resources Department, I wondered if it was a potential scam." Grayson immediately called Eugenia Foster of his Human Resources Department. She was quick to say, "This may sound alarming, but someone has filed a claim for

unemployment benefits in your name."

Grayson said that Foster told him he wasn't the first employee in the company to be targeted for this scam. Since the pandemic,

"I was shocked to actually receive a letter from DUA confirming I had apparently filed a claim for unemployment using my personal info."

- James Grayson

there has been a rise in unlawful unemployment claims in Massachusetts.

Realizing the urgency, Grayson immediately contacted the DUA. Grayson said, "The representative made sure I wasn't trying to block the real James Grayson from rightfully receiving his unemployment money."

Grayson was sure he had eradicated the issue but admitted, "I was shocked to actually receive a letter from DUA confirming I had apparently

filed a claim for unemployment using my personal info." Since he hadn't actually filed a claim, Grayson had to report the filing of his fraudulent claim to DUA online with a follow-up call to

way, nobody can buy a car or house, rent an apartment, or get any credit cards using your info. Maybe you should file an extension for these actions so they can halt any adverse activity

their Customer Service.

Grayson visited his local Police Station to complete a Police Report for fraudulent activity. Officer Mei-Ling Polanco Diaz of the Fitchburg Police Department assisted him with the completion of the paperwork.

Diaz said, "There's been a big rise in fraudulent claims like yours. So, don't be too worried. The next thing you should do is contact the three credit agencies and have them place an alert and freeze your account. That

bank and credit union making them aware of my actions. They both agreed to monitor his accounts.

Similarly, John Leland of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, a 68-year-old retired pilot said,

"I received a letter from the Massachusetts unemployment office a couple of weeks ago asking me to verify my identity. I thought it was a scam... But I wasn't sure if the letter was real or fake." He was lucky in 38 years of professionally flying, he had never made and unemployment claim.

Grayson said, "You know, I used to laugh at the TV ads for identity theft protection. But now, I know the damage that can be done. I want to urge anybody that believes they've had a fake jobless claim filed in their name to take the steps I've made ASAP and report their suspicions to the DUA."

Grayson next contacted the U.S. Social Security Administration concerning his identity theft. Since his passport had expired, no action was taken for this situation. He notified his



Homeless Shelters

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when they needed it."

Our Fathers House, Inc. was established in 1983 and was the first homeless emergency shelter in Norther Worcester County. Since then it has grown from a 'shelter of last resort' to an agency that offers comprehensive case management services to the homeless. Our Fathers House's

resources include but are not limited to The Emergency Shelter on 55 Lunenburg St. Fitchburg, MA. The Elizabeth House on 76 Mechanic St. Fitchburg, MA that offers transitional housing to women in recovery. And last but not least the Community Food Pantry on 40 Boutelle St. Fitchburg, MA. that is located in the basement of the Faith Christian Church.

Mehmud talked about the Fitchburg AMC's work with the homeless community of the area. Mehmud said "At least once a month the AMC Fitchburg chapter will either give, cook, or order food for Our Father's House in Fitchburg." Mehmud said that members of the AMC Fitchburg chapter, including himself, are urged to donate or hand out food or clothing to the

homeless and people in need that are on the streets every day. Mehmud explained that at least twice a month he likes to buy sandwiches from small family owned businesses and hand them out to some of the people that he knows who are living on the streets. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA is the nation's largest Muslim organization

under one leader, and they have 73 chapters nationwide including the nation's oldest mosque established in 1921 in Chicago, IL. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community or (AMC) was founded in 1889 by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad a Muslim Messiah who started a revival within Islam that emphasizes Peace, Love, Justice, and the Sanctity of Life.

“Will We Ever Work Again?”

COVID-19 Has Strong Effects on Local Music Industry



Photo from bluecanoerecords.com

Chuck Langford

By Cheryl Locksley-Grant
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Since the arrival of COVID-19, the biggest casualty in the local music industry has been live performances. The question local musicians have been asking is, “Will we ever work again?”

“In any other year, I would have played at least 80 gigs and taught 100 private lessons by now. But since the clubs closed and weddings were cancelled, the money for musicians has really dried up,” said Chuck Langford, saxophonist and music instructor.



Photo from athenewilson.com

Athene Wilson

Massachusetts musicians have found new ways to reach their supporters with the social media platforms of Twitch, Facebook Live, Instagram, YouTube, and Zoom. Although the inclusions of such mediums is not new, the platforms allow local musicians to offer fans exclusive accessibility to new music, videos, and virtual performances.

Prior to COVID-19, Athene Wilson typically sang four to five times per week at churches, weddings, restaurants, and clubs. “All my gigs pretty much came to a halt. The only thing I have

is my weekly Facebook show: *The Porch Soul Series: Athene Wilson* which comes on Monday evenings,” Wilson said.

Local musicians have cashed in on cravings of people wanting to fulfill hidden dreams of playing the piano, guitar, and other instruments. Professional musicians are eager to show students how easy music can be learned with online music lessons. “I’ve taught guitar to an entire family and they all were reading and playing chords in a month,” said Jodee Frawlee, guitarist.

The American Federation of Musicians reported, “While 80% of the musicians in Massachusetts who received revenue exclusively from music saw a 75% decrease in their incomes, 20% of our musicians have reported their incomes have increased by 100% or more.”

One local musician who has thrived during the pandemic was Frawlee, a singer, songwriter, and guitarist. Her opportunities for live performances became plentiful once summer arrived and Governor Charlie Baker



Photo from jodeefrawlee.com

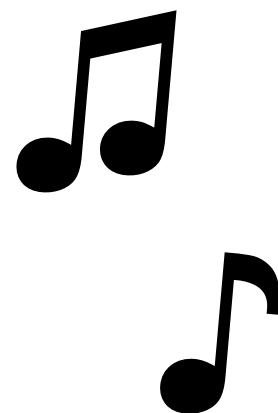
Jodee Frawlee

“In any other year, I would have played at least 80 gigs and taught 100 private lessons by now. But since the clubs closed and weddings were cancelled, the money for musicians has really dried up.”

- Chuck Langford

Langford said, “All I’ve ever been is a musician and this is the first time I’ve ever qualified for Unemployment Compensation. Since I get Misc-1099 forms for my teaching and freelance gigs, I now get unemployment benefits for being a musician! And that makes a big difference since my wife and I have a new, six-week

authorized Phase 2 of the re-opening of Massachusetts. That was when solo musicians who played piano or guitar were bombarded with requests for outdoor entertainment. This may very well have changed since the onset of Winter weather and the resurgence of COVID-19 cases in Massachusetts.



Helping the Hungry on Campus

Food for Thought Pantry Sees Uptick in Use



Image courtesy of MWCC

By Yamari David
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Before Covid-19, students could come to the MWCC food pantry “Food for Thought” and shop for up to 20 items per month. Since the pandemic, that number has risen up to 30 items every three weeks. Shelley Nicholson, director of the Brewer Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement who also oversees the operations of the food pantry, says that instead of coming to the physical food pantry, students now schedule an appointment online to pick up their food. Once they arrive on campus they

can call or knock on the doors and a member of the pantry will come out to bring a bag of pre-packaged food. This ensures safe delivery and environment for the students and members.

The first step for students who wish to partake in the benefits of the food pantry is filling out an application online through the MWCC website. You only need to be a student at MWCC, but you do not need to provide your income. According to Nicholson, the application is mainly for demographic purposes and can be used to inform the members who run the pantry of any allergies

students might have. They can also add special requests and, although they are not guaranteed, Nicholson says that the staff tries their best to make them happen. Once the staff approves of their application, then the students are all set to go.

The pantry started in October of 2017. Staff at MWCC began to notice that students weren’t focusing and the reason behind that was because they were hungry. There has been a study stating two out of three community college students deal with food insecurity, ultimately leaving them with not enough

food to eat. This doesn’t just apply to the students, but their families as well. Members of the Students Serving Our Students program (SOS) decided it was time to do something about this issue.

This last Thanksgiving, the food pantry assembled food baskets to give out to students like they have done every previous year. This also came with a \$20 gift card to buy fresh produce or meats. This did not interfere with the 30 items they already receive every three weeks.

A generous donation from Senator Stephen M. Brewer

from the Brewer Center for Civic Learning kickstarted the program. This donation allowed them to buy a food cart and shelving to help jumpstart the program. It runs through donations and fundraising, however. The reason the food pantry can provide food to students without any costs, according to Nicholson, is because the pantry is running through the partnership with the Worcester County Food Bank. Mount Wachusett was the WCFB’s first partnership with a college. The program did so well that they started partnering with other colleges.

The food pantry makes every effort to reach out to all the students that are in need, but they know they are not reaching everyone. “I always explain it to students this way,” Nicholson said. “If you were a veteran student, you wouldn’t hesitate to go into a veteran service’s office and find out what they have to offer. So, think about it this way: it’s just another student service you already pay for it in your tuition, so come in and use the food pantry.”

OPINION

Are Apples Enough?

Experts Weigh in on When to See a Doctor in the Pandemic

By Cheryl Locksley-Grant
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Fewer patients in central Massachusetts are seeking medical assistance out of concern for COVID-19. Even emergency rooms of hospitals are seeing fewer patients for serious health issues such as heart attacks, strokes, and respiratory illnesses.

Despite physicians’ warnings not to avoid medical treatment, patients are asking, “When is it safe to go to the doctor?”

Patients should not take on the burden of making this decision alone. They should call

their doctor to make the most informative choice.

“I discuss with my patients whether they’ve had any new symptoms, the number of medications they take, my concerns about chronic conditions, and the last time I saw them to decide whether we need an office exam or if a telehealth visit will do,” said Sanjay Basu, M.D.

The American Cancer Society advises patients receiving cancer treatments and dialysis to go to their regularly scheduled appointments. Adult women

and men should consult their doctors to ask if it is best to be screened now or postpone their mammograms, pap smears, and colonoscopies until a later date. Patients with asthma and allergies should visit their doctors for their allergy shots because they don’t just reduce allergy symptoms. “They also help control asthma flare ups that could send them to the Emergency Room,” said Basu.

Even during the pandemic, healthcare professionals believe that everyone should get influenza vaccines because

they prevent numerous flu-related illnesses. Should people not regularly see a doctor, flu shots are also available at several locations including neighborhood pharmacies and local health departments.

Despite COVID-19, several immunizations require doctor’s visits. Among them are those for newborns, whose immune systems are not yet fully developed. They need to visit their Pediatricians to get their weight checked. Children up to 24 months should also see their Pediatricians to get

shots and have developmental observations.

Pregnant patients should call to speak to their OB/GYN doctors to see when they need to have office visits. Some prenatal care such as ultrasounds and lab work need to be completed in their doctor’s office. Their Obstetrician may suggest that their prenatal care can be a combination of in-person and virtual appointments to decrease the potential of COVID-19 exposure.

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Crushing Comfort Zones

COVID has completely reshaped modern dating culture

By Kristopher Madden
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

“When this is all over” was a fun thing to stay in April, when people were optimistically looking forward to the end of COVID. In the following seven months, that saying became less optimistic and more cautious and society was forced to continue wearing masks and socially distancing themselves, which ruined the dating scene as we had once known it.

Gone were the bar scenes and meetups that we would normally mingle with each

a fun time with someone new. People are still finding ways to meet new and interesting friends and romances are still budding. Christine Guigiano and her boyfriend Mark Mitchell met in July on Xbox Live, a medium neither had ever thought to turn to for a potential romantic partner.

“We both started playing this game together by chance... We got matched together, did a few rounds and had a lot of fun, so we became friends and it just kind of went from there.” Guigiano said. Guigiano said that they have



“It’s easier having that virtual hand to hold.”

- Christine Guigiano

other. Instead we were met with six feet of space between us and potential suitors, in addition to the masks, and a deadly virus in the background making meeting new people hazardous to one’s health.

Love cannot be stopped, however, and the dating scene moved precariously forward and adapted to our strange new world. Luckily you don’t need a COVID test every time you have

since been having Skype dates and that they text each other frequently to stay in contact. Guigiano lives near Keene, NH and Mitchell is from Leicester, MA. “It was lucky that we were both in New England, so that when this is all over, we don’t have to go far to meet up,” Guigiano said. “We haven’t met yet, but we decided to make it exclusive. It’s easier having that virtual hand to hold.”

Kevin Russell and his girlfriend Rhea met during their online classes, transitioning from in-class to distanced learning at Worcester State. “We had seen each other around campus but I was really shy, so I never talked to her. One day in class we got partnered together and we had to work on a project. We both live in Worcester, obviously, so we started hanging out in person as the restrictions lifted.

I’m glad we did before they lock back down again,” Russell said, apprehensively. He and his girlfriend have been together since April but waited until June to meet in person.

Patrick Barton works as a cook in a food truck. His now-girlfriend Kaitlyn Beaumont had been a regular at his truck, carefully socially distancing herself from other customers three times a week for one of his Philly cheesesteaks, and finally asked him for his number.

“One day after the lunch rush was over, I noticed Pat sitting on a picnic table taking a break and I told him the sandwich he made was amazing. We exchanged numbers and it went from there,”

Russel said. Russel didn’t believe that she would meet her next boyfriend eating at his food truck, but feels that sometimes it’s worth it to try new things. “Sometimes you don’t know what you’ll find if you don’t step outside your comfort zone, and if COVID has done anything, it has reshaped our comfort zones,” Russel said.

“People are reaching out in new ways and maybe the world just hasn’t spoken your language before, but now could be your time to reinvent yourself and how you interact with the world. You might be surprised who you meet,” said Barton



Image by Online Marketing from Unsplash

Doctor Visits

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During the pandemic, of Obstetricians and Gynecologists advises that unless women have a family history of female health concerns related to breast cancer, cervical cancer, pregnancy, or menopause, their in-person physical examinations may be deferred to a later date or done on an as-needed basis.

Patients with eye emergencies

should visit their doctor or Emergency Room for treatment. According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology, most routine eye care can be rescheduled but there are conditions that warrant visiting your eye doctor. These include sudden loss of vision, eye pain, red eye, any sort of eye injury, a rapid change in vision, or to receive a regular eye injection for a disease like macular degeneration.

Collegiate Conundrum

Student-Athletes Face Another Year of Uncertainty



Image from fitchburgstate.edu

By Seth Farley
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Student athletes at the college level have been facing many challenges ever since the COVID-19 pandemic started back in March. Thousands of athletes around the country have had their seasons, and ultimately their sports careers, put on hold as the pandemic has silenced rising athletes in all different sports. With COVID restrictions continuing to put a halt on collegiate athletics, many student-athletes are wondering if they will miss another year of sports.

Athletes like Fitchburg State University’s Keegan Sharp have been trying to find ways to stay competitive and in shape despite not having a spring of fall sports season in 2020.

Sharp, a 6 foot 9 sophomore, is both a baseball and basketball player at Fitchburg State. When

the pandemic first promoted a lockdown in March, Sharp was training with the FSU Baseball team in Florida. “It was all pretty surreal,” Sharp said. “It seemed as if we had just got there, and in a matter of days we were packing our bags and heading home.”

While it may of gave Sharp more time to work on basketball, the cancellation of spring sports would only be the start to a disappointing 2020.

Sharp was unable to get the training he normally could during the offseason. With COVID lockdown measures staying in effect throughout the summer, Sharp was unable to schedule time with trainers, and did not have as much access to weight rooms or courts.

However, the lack of preparation for the season would not matter much as Fitchburg State’s basketball team would only practice for three weeks before the fall sport season was ultimately cancelled. Sharp noted that his team was split into multiple ‘pods’ of players during practice, and a COVID outbreak on campus was the cause of cancellation.

“At this point I’m just praying we don’t lose spring sports again,” Sharp stated. With both spring and fall sports cancelled, athletes at FSU like Sharp have a

looming fear of missing a second year of athletics. “I fear for the seniors the most. Because if they can’t play for a second year in a row... then what happens?”

The pandemic has not only been hard on athletes in lower divisions who have lost their seasons, but for those who have had to play through the pandemic.

Boston College is one of the

others couldn’t. But mainly it was the conference the schools play in, as well as the staggering amount of money the football program brings in.

Despite their consideration for player safety, Boston College dealt with COVID outbreaks on their swimming and diving team that would later cancel their season.

“It may seem like these kids

NESN. Mackey noted that new international student-athletes were not allowed on campus this fall and did not get to play due to pandemic travel restrictions.

This ruling forced Boston College’s men’s soccer team to cancel their season due to roster size. “It’s great to see sports being played here again, but you can’t help but notice a lot of kids are missing their shot right now,”

“It may not look promising, but I believe in the long run these colleges will understand the situation they’re in, and the kids who deserve to get a change will get one.”

- Keegan Sharp

few New England schools to have played a fall sports season in 2020. As a Division I college, many factors went into why BC could have a sports season, and

are lucky to be able to play this year, but in reality, a lot of opportunity has been lost,” says Jake Mackey, a media producer who covers Boston College on

Mackey stated. While most college athletes have lost out on playing sports this year, it’s left high school athletes wondering if they’ll ever get their shot at the next level. “A lot of upperclassmen have been worried about getting looked at as expected,” said Cameron Fisk, athletic director of North Middlesex Regional High School.

For student-athletes at North Middlesex, getting looked at by colleges has never been easy. For a school whose athletes primary end up at Division III schools, many are worried whether the lack of playing time will disinterest college scouts.

“It may not look promising, but I believe in the long run these colleges will understand the situation they’re in, and the kids who deserve to get a change will get one.” Fisk stated.



Images from bc.edu and nmrhs.org



Neighborhood Observations

To the House With Baffling Design Choices

By Daniel Dow
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

As I walk down Shea street, I battle a piercing, frigid, forceful breeze that even with the sun at its height of the day is unable to warm my chilled bones. If anything, it just agitates my combat against the cold. I try to block the sun's rays as I walk against the wind, fighting two battles simultaneously.

The weather has taken its effect on a typically active and vibrant neighborhood. Families have retreated to the warmth of their homes and are effortlessly reminded of the cold as the wind howls.

Although the people may be gone, there are reminders of what this small up and coming neighborhood has to offer. The house for sale signs have gone up and just as quickly come down as the aging population takes advantage of the current market boom, ushering in a younger generation of new home owners to the area.

As I turn right onto Lee street, following the fence line, I am met with 60s style ranch housing, mirroring each other straight down the road. These ranches, although built in the 60's, have been kept up to date and modernized. As I continue to walk, I am met with the uniqueness of the neighborhood.

I first see the only two-level home and just to the left of the home, a boulder that has been painted a bright green and resembles a giant frog. This bright green frog, complete with a towel that has been converted to resemble a mask, has left me with some questions. Where did this idea originate from? How long has the rock been painted for? What has the reaction been in the neighborhood and has there been new or different reactions as the neighborhood has changed?

To the Girl Who Took My Coffee Order

By Jessica Jablonski
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

You're probably around my age, 19 or 20, and all I really know about you is that you work at Dunkin Donuts. Yet somehow you are one of the kindest people I have ever met. There has never been a time where I have pulled up to the drive-through window and you haven't radiated with positivity and benevolence despite every negative thing currently going on in the world.

I can always see that you're smiling under your mask, and although you are so beautiful in every way with your long brown hair pulled into a ponytail and your makeup done perfectly, you always have a compliment to spare. It's rare to find that after such a short interaction with someone you barely even know, you've left with a smile on your face and such a wholesome start to your day.

Maybe it's just in your nature and you don't even realize it but coming from someone who has worked at a coffee place before it's hard to continue being so calm and friendly in such a fast-paced work environment. Even though customer service is a big part of your job, anyone can tell that you're genuinely just a gracious soul that wants people to be left with a smile on their face, even if they're just getting their daily coffee order.

To the Best Shop in Town

By Shaye McKeen
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Oakham, MA as a town is quite plain, really; another bedroom community out in the countryside where the most interesting attractions are the two convenience stores 3 doors apart, the church, the library, and the town hall. That is our reputation after all, a backwoods town that most of the state hasn't even heard of. However, in this densely wooded and scarcely populated town resides a business that you would be hard pressed to find anymore, a Golden Age hot rod shop.

As has been said since ancient Jerusalem, beauty is fleeting. The infinite march of time leaves its mark on all things, and as the times change and styles come and go, there is always something to be said in the name of nostalgia. The concept of vintage has always been popular in those who lived during significant stylistic eras, such as with 80s fashion, vinyl records, early film, and many other trends and collector focuses. But one of the most currently relevant and widespread cultures of nostalgia exists in hot rod and street racing.

My father, Michael McKeen, is the sole owner of McKeen's Machines in Oakham. Every month I see a new rotation of brightly colored and absolutely deafening muscle cars cycle in and out of my father's garage, ranging through every part of the color spectrum. Customers come from all over the state to see my father for work, including a 2012 Rat Rod of the year winner from Rat Rod magazine, an award winning national magazine dedicated to hot rod culture.

In this tiny, quiet town, one of the things that stands out the most would be a flaming orange 1966 Ford Fairlane tearing down the main road during the warmer seasons. In the driver's seat you would find what I would consider one of the best mechanics in the entire state, my father Mike McKeen.

To the Old Man in CVS and His Dog

By Maddison Willigar
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

I was in the checkout line of CVS with my hands burrowed in my pockets. The crisp chill of the air had not fully vanished from my bones yet. As items were being scanned, something in the corner of my eye captivated my attention. Curiosity pulled my gaze, and I saw you, a man of older age, wearing a leather jacket and a baseball cap.

You began scuffing out of the store with nothing in your hands. I wondered what you were searching for that you did not find. I noticed something following behind you, almost trying to keep up with your scuffled pace. A dog, golden in color, standing up tall with something between its teeth. Seconds later, I realized that the very thing between its teeth was its leash.

Immediately I felt a smile grow under the warm air of my mask. I nudged my brother to look in the direction I was and observed his eyes smile in the same way I am convinced his face was beneath his mask. I wandered out of the store and saw you and then your dog on the passenger side of your car with the leash still grasped in its jaw. It looked as if he was smiling, like a young child who had been allowed to sit in the front seat for the first time.

You were moving things around in your car, rummaging to find your keys, I suppose. As I sat in the passenger seat of my car, I could not help but think about that dog. The glimpse of joy and pride that dog carried was just enough to help me forget about the cold and bring a different kind of warmth to my bones.

To the Soup Kitchen Doing Renovations

By Angel Marcano
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

The fence was first to go down. Then, the outside changed color. For what reason did the Mustard Seed, a local, faith-based soup kitchen, need to enhance the aesthetics of its building? Every day before work, I witnessed the dozen or so construction workers, carpenters and painters work profusely to recreate the image of our neighborhood's number one attraction: the soup kitchen.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the functionality of the Mustard Seed was almost entirely thwarted. What had once been a rendezvous for the hungry and those in dire need had now become the working site for men dressed in cargo pants, dull sweaters, and heavy-duty work boots.

In a time where many were (and are) in need, our local soup kitchen deemed it appropriate to spend money on renovations: a light blue wall and a fence. Renovations which, apparently, made no improvements to the functionality of its establishment. All I saw was the tearing down and erecting of a fence. A blue wall. And the lack of parking on my street.

Review: *Marvel Studios' WandaVision*

She's a witch. He's an android. Can they make it work?



Image copyright The Walt Disney Company and Marvel Studios

By **Thomas Hill Jr.**
OBSERVER DESIGNER

NOTE: This review covers the first three episodes of *WandaVision*.

For the sake of a fair review, I feel it is important to note upfront that the Vision from Marvel Comics is my favorite superhero, and *The Vision and The Scarlet Witch: A Year in the Life* is one of my all-time favorite comic book series. I will, however, do my best to set this bias aside and approach this series with some form of objectivity. With that said, I believe *WandaVision* to be one of the most interesting and unique pieces of superhero storytelling Marvel Studios has produced to date.

WandaVision follows the lives of Wanda Maximoff (an enhanced human with telepathic and telekinetic "magic" powers)

and the Vision (an android that can fly, walk through walls, and shoot lasers). As newlyweds, they have decided to take a break from being Avengers and recently moved into the picturesque suburban town of Westview in the hopes of living normal, human lives. Despite their best efforts, however, things are... a little odd. Very odd, actually, and not just in terms of our lead characters. The format of the show is different from anything else in the "Marvel Cinematic Universe," or MCU. And this is what makes it so special.

The series is presented as a decade-jumping sitcom, with the episodes set in the styles of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, respectively. I assume the trend will continue for the rest of the episodes. The details used to

capture each era of television are many: there's the period-appropriate costuming, the dialogue - with one character enthusiastically shouting "It's gonna be a gas!" - and the 50s and 60s episodes are even presented in black-and-white. Wanda and Vision's house, while sporting the same layout, is redecorated in detail for each decade. Each episode also has its own decade-appropriate catchy opening sequence (you'll be humming the theme to episode two for days). Each theme tune evokes the style of a popular sitcom from the era, i.e. *The Dick Van Dyke Show* and *Bewitched*. Marvel even went through the effort to make sure the effects were suitably cheesy, when appropriate, such as the cartoon effect when Vision makes himself appear human, or the "strings" when Wanda makes

up the roles in 2015's *Avengers: Age of Ultron*. Now, they have shown to have quite the comedic range, as well, both as a duo and when separated, acting against the various side characters. Standouts include Agnes (Kathryn Hahn), Wanda's new best friend and nosy neighbor, and Geraldine (Teyonah Parris), the mysterious new girl in town.

Speaking of mystery, this is where we get to the true meat of the show. Something isn't right in Westview. Things keep changing without explanation, and many little cracks keep appearing in the glossy, sitcom façade our characters live in; a weird moment at a dinner party here, an ominous radio message there, and then there's the elephant in the room: Vision (I won't spoil why, in case there are any new Marvel viewers in the audience).

and overall mystery may be enough to soften the blow and keep them interested, but once character- or movie-specific details arise, things could get muddy. This "continuity beast" already begins to bob to the surface by the end of episode 3, so we'll see how much more in-depth it gets as the show progresses, and whether casual viewers care.

Overall, I would highly recommend checking the series out. It's funny, it's cute, it's weird, and above all, it's entirely unlike anything in the MCU library. Throughout all of the first three episodes, there is not one fistfight, laser blast, or supervillain. It's just spending time with these characters and their odd little world. The epic blockbuster superhero stories are certainly enjoyable and

"It's funny, it's cute, it's weird, and above all, it's entirely unlike anything in the MCU library."

- Thomas Hill

items float across the room.

The acting is also very effective, especially in regard to the two leads. Elizabeth Olsen (Wanda) and Paul Bettany (Vision) have proven themselves as capable dramatic actors playing these characters over the course of six years, first taking

Of course, this does speak to a flaw with the show; some of the enjoyment is lost without prior knowledge of these characters and the larger MCU. As a fan of both of those things, I adore the show, but a casual viewer perusing Disney+ may be a bit lost. The episodic sitcom nature

have their place, but after the grand finale that was *Avengers: Endgame*, I feel *WandaVision* is exactly the kind of show Marvel (and maybe people in the everyday world) need right now: a quirky, small-scale story about a witch and an android trying to find normalcy in a crazy world.



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Have your own thoughts on a TV show, film, book, or video game? Write a review and send it to mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu It may just end up in our next issue!

Review: *The Mandalorian Season 2*

More of the Same, But That's Not a Bad Thing



Image copyright The Walt Disney Company and Lucasfilm Ltd.

By **Dylan Quigley**
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

The second season of *The Mandalorian* was a delightful and entertaining break from 2020 that we should all thank creator Jon Favreau for. Scoring high on Rotten Tomatoes, critic Scott Bryan from BBC said, "We're in an age of TV where so much

money can be thrown around and it doesn't work. This is throwing a lot of money at something and it does." Most fans are happy and Star Wars fanatics are eager to see what's next.

The first season helped stamp the show as a more mature and unique addition to the Star Wars legacy. The show gives us an

almost wild west take on the Star Wars Universe, a Lone Wolf finding a purpose in protecting a helpless child from a dangerous world. With the mask covering Padro Pascal's face most of the time in the show it is all too easy to imagine Clint Eastwood under the mask firing a six shooter. This kind of nostalgia hasn't really been used so successfully in Star Wars before.

In Season 2, the Mandalorian is now determined to get this helpless child not only to safety, but to the people who can train him to use his powers

The best stories are the ones that just keep on giving, and the western movie motif continues throughout the second season, our Lone Wolf is starting to show more parental emotions and instincts. There is depth to these characters that builds more and more throughout the season. I fell in love with the two main characters more and more each episode.

The narrative is also incredibly satisfying this season. It seems like there isn't any scramble to tell the story, and unlike other new Star Wars stories I wasn't in any rush to hear the end. Each episode took you on an adventure into the far away galaxy showing the audience the struggle that the two main characters are going through. The visual effects in each episode is jaw-dropping, with every set being tremendously designed.

Of course, it wouldn't be action sequences. Whether the Mandalorian is fighting giant cave creatures, giant ice spiders, or getting into chases with X-Wing fighters, the audience is left at the edge of their seat. The Mandalorian even faces off with lightsabers and holds his own in battle, and that alone should cement Padro Pascal's character in Star Wars lore. But Mando just keeps getting cooler, with him be-friending a former Jedi, and later even the legendary bounty hunter Boba Fett.

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Stressed? Overwhelmed? Feeling Down?

If current events are leaving you feeling hopeless, or you just feel you need to talk, for any reason, feel free to contact

Melissa Manzi at m_manzi@mwcc.mass.edu or check out her Mental Health Minute videos at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cwif9n1WUs&feature=emb_logo