

The Mount Observer

“Voices of the students of Mount Wachusett Community College”

PREVIEWS



Heroiam slava!

President Vladimir Putin addressed the world, creating a false and unjustifiable narrative for the invasion of Ukraine; a narrative that calls for the “de-Nazification” of the sovereign nation of Ukraine.

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Profile: Kaitlyn Churcher

Kaitlyn Churcher, 21, of Leominster, enjoys both art and traveling and has decided to incorporate both into her plans for her major, and future career path.

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Is the National Society of Leadership and Success Right for You?

Some may have heard that the National Society of Leadership and Success—Sigma Alpha Pi (NSLS), can help students achieve personal growth, empowerment, and career success, but is joining this society worth it?

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Creative Writing

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Burnout Through a Magnifying Glass

MWCC Mental Health Counselor and Student Discuss Burnout and its Contributing Factors

By Maddie Willigar

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Though many may be familiar with the term “burnout,” what may be unfamiliar is the variety of factors that can contribute to it and the various ways it can be experienced in the body. MWCC Mental Health Counselor Melissa Manzi and student Cami Stephens share what burnout is, what factors could contribute, and advice on how to overcome this issue.

According to Manzi, during the beginning stages of burnout, people may find their thought process becoming more limited, causing them to shut down new ideas quicker than normal. She explained that though burnout

symptoms can overlap with symptoms of depression or stress, burnout is a different experience that is dependent on someone’s environment, whether that be school or work.

Manzi said the most prominent sign of burnout is exhaustion, but people may also experience feelings of irritability or anger. Manzi added that “physical symptoms always come out in our body” and said that people might also see these burnout symptoms manifest in stomachaches, back pain, or even tension headaches.

Manzi explained that the individuals who are most likely to experience burnout are those that help others, such as people



Photo by Nubelson Fernandes from Unsplash

working in the healthcare field. But when looking at the academic world specifically, perfectionists, people without support systems, people who are struggling in their classes and major, and students during the pandemic are at high risk as

well. One student who has observed how this perfectionistic mindset can contribute to burnout is Stephens, who is a Liberal Arts major with a focus in

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Jamming with JEMS

Harmonious Trio Performs Virtually at the Mount on March 3

By Maddie Willigar

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Performing at MWCC via zoom on March 3 to kick off Women’s History Month is the talented pop-rock trio, JEMS, composed of Jessica Rotter, Emily Colombier, and Sarah Margaret Huff. From their inspirations to the message they wish to convey with their music, JEMS radiates the importance of influential women.

As a result of both of their mothers being classical musicians, Rotter said that she and Colombier grew up together from a young age and collaborated on music. Then when a mutual friend introduced Huff and Rotter after college, they all began to sing backup for one another and create music with each other. But Rotter said

that their formation as a trio started partly as a way to travel.

In 2017, the group went to see the Total Solar Eclipse and used that opportunity to create the “Eclipse Tour,” which resulted in them beginning to be booked as a group. Huff added that at this point, they didn’t have any songs specifically for JEMS but were singing one another’s songs as this newly formed band.

Huff said she has always loved singing and creating and found songwriting to be an “interior therapy.” She began songwriting when she was around 12 or 13 years old and soon realized that she could share her songs with others. “I always loved singing, but I think the connectivity to other people through songwriting was more

meaningful and kind of pushed me into wanting to pursue that more than singing,” Huff said.

Colombier said that she didn’t start writing songs until after college, but she had been singing since the moment she could. Rotter explained that just like Colombier and Huff, she had been singing all her life and originally had goals of becoming an opera singer. However, Rotter soon discovered that her “passion was in creating more so than performing.”

Huff explained that their songwriting process as a group can change depending on what they are working on, but “usually somebody brings a partially formed idea, and... [they] all latch onto it and develop it together.”

Colombier said that one

of her favorite things about music is that “it’s the ultimate connector.” “I love that when we get together and write, it might come from one individual person, [or] one particular experience, but that we each find our own meaning from it and our own connection...and then listeners have a different response and connection to something that can be so personal but then also be so personal to so many people,” Colombier said.

On this same note, Huff said one of her favorite things is the harmonies and finding out how well the three of their voices sounded together since they’re not related.

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Reaching Burnout

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psychology— currently, she is completing her last semester at the Mount. Having noticed burnout creep up last semester, Stephens found herself emotional, tired, stressed, and prioritizing school over her mental health and talking to friends.

Stephens compared her experience with burnout to a feeling of needing to drive somewhere but “having no gas in your tank.” Stephens said, “It’s a very uncomfortable and unsettling feeling because you know that there is more work to do...but you’re physically and mentally incapable of doing it because you’re so burned out.”

Stephens recognized that despite feeling burned out, her desire to maintain high grades is what caused her to continually push herself. Stephens said, “Once you get that victory of having perfect grades, you want to hold onto it forever.”

Manzi explained that “quintessential burnout” is this feeling of wanting to push yourself past exhaustion. But in order for people to take action and rewire this mentality, Manzi suggested others “take a step back, to not be so focused on results, but be more focused on showing up, paying attention, but then connecting to others.”

Manzi said that one of the simplest yet most overlooked things is spending time with friends. She also suggested that students use the less hectic parts of the semester intentionally.

“Those times when things calm back down, make sure you’re spending that time wisely by doing all those healthy things that are going to help your body withstand that next cycle of when things get tough again,” Manzi said.

But the first thing Manzi said people should ask themselves is what is causing them to be burned out. She elaborated that students

who are working full time and doing school full-time might be able to give somewhere. Manzi also said that it’s okay to have boundaries and that “you don’t always have to say yes.”

Manzi explained that other factors could also contribute to burnout as well, such as students studying something they aren’t sure matches their values or goals, a heavy workload, or lack of relationships, control, or fairness.

Manzi added, “Don’t underestimate that Covid in itself was a cause of burnout for... many people.” She explained that Covid was unfair, caused lack of relationships, and was out of our control.

Manzi also said that “students who...had to address the changes that we went through with covid” could become burned out because some may struggle to navigate technology, such as a computer or not have reliable access to the internet. These

factors can exert more energy than normal and could contribute to burnout symptoms.

In addition, students that like socializing or become energized from being around others were now submerged in the complete opposite: isolation. This act of what Manzi described as going “against someone’s grain” caused students to work extra hard.

On this same note, Stephens said that the pandemic could contribute to students experiencing burnout because it has caused students to either devote so much more time to their studies, or find it hard to stay motivated to complete assignments at all.

Stephens explained that it’s important for people to figure out what is causing them to be burned out because “it’s a very vicious, damaging cycle” that impacts your mental, emotional, and physical health and can cause you not to give your body

what it needs.

Manzi explained that often a misconception behind burnout is “that it’s someone’s fault.” However, Manzi explained that burnout is a “state” and a direct result of the environment. Manzi pointed out that it was nobody’s fault that Covid happened, and yet the “environment of Covid caused burnout.”

Manzi said that some steps people can take to pull themselves out of burnout are going for a walk outside, ensuring they have support and aren’t isolated, and being consistent with participating in activities that ground them.

Stephens advised people to make sure they have support, reach out to their professors about any problems or questions, take breaks, make time for things they enjoy, and be “intuitive,” and know their own limits.

Jamming with JEMS



Photo from wearejems.com, copyright JEMS

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When describing their music, the group settled on the term “pop-rock.” Rotter said that their first album, JEMS, was “traditional instrumentation in terms of what a band of the era in which we were inspired [by] would do.” She added that bands in the ‘70s would just record the

vocals and instruments in the studio and this was the approach they took with their first album. But Rotter said that their second album (which they are currently working on) is more pop-rock-based than their first.

Regarding the message they hope to convey with their music, Rotter said, “We care a lot about

authenticity, self-acceptance, self-love, and empowering the listener to make choices that put themselves first so that they can love people authentically.” Rotter added that as a group, they want their music to give others permission to feel. She said that fans have relayed this to be true for them and have also said that

they will play their music when “they need to be inspired or in a time where they need to tap back into self-love.”

In honor of Women’s History Month, the group will be performing virtually at the Mount with music off their JEMS album, along with a few new songs and covers. Upon reflecting on what women musicians they look up to the most, Colombier replied, “Joni [Mitchell].” Huff agreed on Joni and said they love so many from that generation, like Carole King, and Rotter added Stevie Nicks. But Rotter said that they are also inspired by music that doesn’t necessarily shape their music as a band.

“I’m inspired by badass females who have no shame in using their full presence, their full voices, and their full essence to communicate,” Rotter said. She explained that because of this, genre doesn’t always matter; it’s more about “people who are unapologetically themselves.”

Looking toward their future career as a band, Huff said she would love to play at Red Rocks

or the Ryman. “One of my favorite parts of this whole thing is either the songwriting or the performing, and the performing and sharing in some of those sacred special places is just ...kind of bucket list moments,” Huff said.

Rotter said she would love to do a soundtrack for a film or something creative on a larger scale, and Colombier agreed that she would love to have music in movies or television as well.

Collaboration-wise, Rotter said she wants one of their records to be produced by Jonathan Wilson. Huff said she would love to collaborate with My Morning Jacket’s Jim James, and Colombier said she would love to work with Roger Waters or write with Dolly Parton.

To hear JEMS in action, make sure to check out tomorrow’s event on InvolveMOUNT and RSVP to receive an invitation: <https://mwcc.campuslabs.com/engage/event/7684252>

Editorial

Heroiam slava!

President Vladimir Putin addressed the world, creating a false and unjustifiable narrative for the invasion of Ukraine; a narrative that calls for the “de-Nazification” of the sovereign nation of Ukraine.

This claim comes after nearly a month-long build-up of troops along the Ukraine border, with Ukraine and its allies calling for peaceful negotiations and for troops along the board to disperse. These pleas were ignored by Russia, with Putin falsely declaring Russia would begin withdrawing troops, which was quickly spotted to be a lie by the United States and British intelligence, as troops continued to gather on the border.

Putin’s fabricated narrative is easily dismantled, as he calls for the “de-Nazification” of Ukraine, which is led by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, a Jew who lost his family in the holocaust. The invasion of Ukraine can truly be summed up by Putin’s speech preceding the invasion where he states that his country must attempt to revive a “historic Russia,” adding, “Ukraine has never had its own authentic statehood. There has never been a sustainable statehood in Ukraine.”

Putin remains a guard to an old world, a world that existed prior to the fall of The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), where its nation’s borders were replaced with new, independent European countries, and this includes Ukraine. A world when the USSR wielded immense political and financial power and was seen by much of the world as equal in power and influence with the United States. The fall of the Soviet Union occurred 31 years ago. Today over half of the Ukrainian population have not known life under the rule of the USSR.

Putin’s shift-in-tone and his ever-changing justifications for the Russian invasion of Ukraine should be a message to the world— Putin will do whatever is necessary to revive the power of Soviet-era Russia. A message that all members of the world need to unite to eliminate— autocratic colonialism is not welcome in the twenty-first century.

This is truly a historic moment; war has not broken out on the continent of Europe since World War II. However, there are many reasons to be hopeful including the swiftness the world has unified to support Ukraine and sanction Russia. According to

CNN Business, immediately following sanctions “Russia’s main MOEX index closed down 33%, while the ruble sank to a record low.” Additionally, Germany has halted certification of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline; a recently completed \$11 billion pipeline project controlled by Russia’s state-run energy.

The Ukrainian President Zelenskyy has called on NATO to do more, and although troops have been sent to neighboring countries who have NATO membership, President Biden has been clear that no American troops will be sent to defend Ukraine. Additionally, much of the world continues to pour in military aid to Ukraine, but the fact remains that any elevation of action by NATO could trigger a world war.

A January New York Times article wrote of Ukraine’s long

denial into the NATO alliance— an action that has been seen as antagonizing action to Russia— a disruption of a delicate balance in Europe and Russia relations. This balance has long been deemed important by many European nations, not only for world peace but also because western countries have long relied on Russia’s fossil fuel supply.

Ukrainians have demonstrated the principles of freedom and Zelenskyy has echoed these sentiments through his leadership during this crisis — with a response to the United States Government “I don’t need a ride, I need more ammunition” when asked if he needs assistance in fleeing the country.

Zelenskyy stands before the world as a symbol, fighting in the trenches with the men and women of Ukraine against a

Russian autocracy that looks to end democracy in its neighboring state.

The unfortunate situation of the Ukrainian people brings about truths that need to be analyzed because these people fight a force that not only threatens Ukraine’s democracy but has countless times threatened the democracy of the United States and many other nations of the world. This is a time when all nations must continue to support Ukraine regardless of the cost.

Putin would like it nothing more than to impart his will onto the world, with minimum response from the world, just like what has occurred so many times in the past. But that is no longer the case— we stand with Ukraine, its people, and for a free democratic world.

When There’s a Will, There’s a Way

Student and Faculty Opinions on Returning to School

By Nichole Camelo
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Let’s face it: returning to school later in life can be nerve-racking. If you’re a working adult, you most likely are not going to quit your job to return to school. Instead, you need to find a college that provides programs which suit your needs.

When choosing a college, it is important to choose a school that offers flexible programs with classes after hours or on weekends; or offers hybrid, online, and face-to-face learning

that can fit into your schedule. MWCC provides programs and policies geared towards helping parents return to campus while juggling children, jobs, and household duties.

Larisa Stacey, a student at MWCC, returned to school after years of work and parenting to pursue her degree. “I was a single mom taking care of my son and working full time to pay the bills,” Stacey said. “I didn’t have any time for school, so I stopped taking courses.”

Later in life, Stacey realized

that she had to follow her own dreams as well, while her son attended elementary school. Stacey began taking classes again slowly while she worked full time, and she is currently enrolled in Elementary Education.

Stacey added, “Find a college that reflects who you are at this point in your life. This could be that a school is not expecting you to drop everything and attend classes full-time; they recognize your career and family obligations and work with you to

develop a program that fits your busy schedule.”

Stacey has found that attending MWCC has suited her busier schedule, as the courses she is taking are offered online. “If it wasn’t for remote learning,” Stacey said, “there’s no way I would have been able to work full-time, make sure my son is taken care of, and physically gone into the school.”

She added that because of the flexibility of MWCC’s schedules and the support the college offers, she can continue

her education, earn her degree, and pursue a career in working with children with special needs. “Every time I have a question, I email my advisor and they are able to walk me through the best steps possible for me to succeed,” Stacey said.

Ann Reynold is the CCAMPIS Advisor at MWCC. The CCAMPIS Program (Child Care Access Means Parents In School) is a federally funded program that provides child

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Is the National Society of Leadership and Success Right for You?

MWCC Students Share the Advantages and Disadvantages of the NSLS Program

By Isabelle Mascary
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Some may have heard that the National Society of Leadership and Success—Sigma Alpha Pi (NSLS), can help students achieve personal growth, empowerment, and career success, but is joining this society worth it?

According to the email invitation, those who join “will gain access to a five-step, skill-building leadership program. Membership benefits include scholarships, an online job bank, a personalized letter of recommendation, and discounts at major brands that will save you hundreds of dollars each year.”

To begin, if you meet the requirements as stated on the NSLS’s InvolveMOUNT page, of a “minimum 2.5 grade point average, and are taking a minimum of 6 credits,” any

student can join this society whether they are taking classes in person or online.

MWCC student Kelly Johnson who is pursuing a certificate in Public Relations, has been a member of NSLS for a few months and has already experienced the benefits of this society.

“NSLS is different than the other societies at Mount Wachusett,” Johnson said. “It’s a national honors society...I really like it. I like listening to the speakers.”

Johnson added she doesn’t currently need the scholarships NSLS offers, but “there’s so much more which...[she] found very beneficial.”

There are simple requirements that students have to complete after joining. “You have to watch three leadership recordings,” Johnson said. “There are dozens, but three is their minimum.”

Johnson added, “There are some really amazing speakers on there, like Barack Obama.”

“Another piece of it is that you have to join a group,” Johnson said. “It’s a small group that you can set up on your own personal time with family or friends.” Johnson added that within this group, you would complete a task that is “a self-driven opportunity to advance yourself” in one area of your life. Johnson said, “The group asks members to set a goal to accomplish, and the group is your accountability partner.”

“Instead of thinking you will approach a task without much knowledge, you have support from other classmates who are cheering you on and giving feedback,” Johnson said.

Aside from building leadership skills, Johnson identified that some other advantages of joining this society are getting to know yourself, getting to practice



Image from Twitter, copyright NSLS

and implement what others are talking about, and networking with like-minded people. “There’s traveling as well,” Johnson said. “There are several programs you can join to travel around the world for a week with other NSLS members.”

To be clear, it is not free, and traveling is not a requirement after joining, but Johnson shared, “Even if a college student can’t afford to go to Costa Rica, for example, it’s a lifetime membership and they travel often.” When talking about leadership as a whole, Johnson added, “You must be self-driven. It’s a lifetime commitment.”

Where one may see the benefits of this program, another may see its disadvantages. MWCC Student Pamela Day, who has been a member of NSLS for a few semesters, said, “It fairly easy to do and complete. [But] [i]t’s really about leadership and I’m not one to get up to lead.”

NSLS offers scholarships to students who plan to transfer, but what if they aren’t transferring? Day said, “They...say they have scholarships for people that are transferring, but I’m not transferring.” Day added, “It’s discouraging to fight for a

scholarship after they made a statement saying there are many scholarships available.”

For those seeking to apply for scholarships after joining NSLS, there is quite a bit of work to do. “It’s so involved,” Day said. “They want examples on leadership, what leadership roles you obtained, and if you volunteered.” Day added, “I volunteer but not to the degree they are asking for.”

Day also shared that a form of government identification is required to apply for these scholarships. “They want proof of who you are,” Day said. “It’s almost like getting a government clearance for a scholarship...I felt uncomfortable scanning my documents. It was too much.” Day made it clear that she didn’t want to discourage others but wanted to share her experience.

When asked what could be done to make the membership more inclusive for those who aren’t transferring or those that have a family life to balance out aside from their work life, Day shared, “The scholarships should be a little simpler to do, [and] not as long as they are, because not everyone has the free time.”

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care and Before & After School subsidies to qualified students enrolled part-time or full-time at any of the four MWCC campuses (Gardner, Leominster, Devens, or Fitchburg). Reynolds stated, “Going to school while raising a family is a balancing act. You are not on this journey alone.”

“Services for student-parents have increased over the last few years, out of a greater need to support this growing college population.” Reynolds said. “Many times a student-parent will not disclose they are raising a family and become invisible within the Higher Education world.”

Reynolds added, “The [COVID-19 pandemic] has shined a light on this group of students, and we know if we support them, they are more

likely to enroll, persist, and graduate! MWCC has great support in place for student-parents including CCAMPIS, PSG, and the new Family Resource Center.”

In offering advice to other parents returning to school, Reynolds said, “It’s important to find a program that truly values the diverse experiences students bring to the classroom, professors do not assume you’re fresh out of high school, but rather that you’ve gained knowledge from your own life and recognizes that experience has relevance in the classroom and can contribute in a very unique way to the class.”

There are also those students who go to college right out of high school, work, and decide to return to pursue bigger goals. For example, Greg Malhoit, now in his late-forties, went

to MWCC directly out of high school, graduated, and continued onto his master’s in business.

Malhoit is married, with two children, a landscaping manager, and he has decided it’s time to return to school to pursue a master’s in strategic leadership and organizational leadership. “Going to school now feels so different than when I graduated high school,” he said. “Now it’s something I want to do for not only myself but for my family.”

Malhoit added, “It’s never too late to change your career or decide that there is something more in life to fulfill your dreams. Maybe you want a pay raise, a certain degree would help, or you want to choose a completely different career path. Whatever the reason, know that it’s never too late and never cut yourself short.”

A Tale of Dungeons & Dragons

Teacher Describes the Benefits of the Role-Playing Phenomenon

By Gabriel Drouin

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Dungeons and Dragons, also known as D&D, has often been passed off as satanic due to the monstrous art on the cover of its books, but is now becoming the savior for many, acting as a safe outlet for creativity, personal expression, and even therapy. Dice rollers both old and young have partaken in the game for decades, since its creation in 1974.

It is hard to believe that a game that, in recent years, has become so widely popular was once seen as literal evil. Some even believed that by playing the game you were opening yourself up to demonic possession. Oddly enough, fighting off demons can be a common occurrence for the heroes in a D&D game.

For many years D&D was seen as a game only social pariahs would play. Stereotypes of geeks chugging Mountain Dew and scarfing Cheetos while hiding away in their parents' basements were commonplace when D&D was mentioned. Of course, people of all varieties play D&D

and always have, even super stars such as Vin Diesel and Joe Manganiello.

The growing popularity of D&D has had more benefits than just a growing range of inclusion; it is also being used to help people therapeutically. A quick google search will list countless articles about how effective it is and how more therapists, like Michael Keady, are using D&D to help their patients.

Andrew P. David, a special education teacher in the Athol school system and registered behavioral technician specializing in helping children with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder), utilizes the skills he learned playing D&D to better connect with his students. Playing D&D fosters skills of improvisation and quick thinking, skills that come in handy for any educator. As D&D is a team-oriented game, it also helps develop a sense of trust and the ability to foster trust in others.

David pointed out that his own daughter has ASD and playing D&D together has helped their

relationship grow tremendously. The collaborative storytelling of D&D gives them a rubric to use their imaginations together in a productive and engaging way, something that can be

official capacity as a mental health aid, David said: "When we create a character, even though they are a work of fiction, they always reveal a truth about ourselves, whether or not

involved what the individual may need help with but also lets that individual express a part of themselves that they may otherwise keep bottled up in an unhealthy manner.

David's interactions with D&D go beyond the personal and professional, bordering the religious as well. Although stating he is not a religious man himself, his wife is devoutly Catholic and also plays D&D. After being asked if the topics of D&D and religion ever intersect in his life, David said, "Not at all; it is a matter of understanding. In the past there were a lot of miscommunications, I think, but we [David and his wife] understand that it is simply a game of make believe." Despite the negative connotations surrounding D&D's past, recent studies and long standing personal accounts have shown that the roleplaying game provides a healthy outlet for anyone seeking a means of personal expression, imaginative exercise, or a fun night that allows friends and family to connect.



Photo by S L from Unsplash

challenging for anyone with ASD.

When asked what he thought about D&D being used in an

we mean to... Everything you create and write about comes out as a part of you." This not only reveals to the professional

Permanent InvolveMOUNT

A Look Into the Virtual Connection Hub for Clubs and Activities

By Kelly Johnson

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

The Student Life online culture has risen since 2020, providing opportunity for MWCC students to virtually interact through clubs and events. From a historic bulletins-based announcement board for clubs to post activities and meetings, to the futuristic InvolveMOUNT platform found in iConnect, events on campus are accessible no matter where a student finds themselves logging on through a computer.

Kathy Matson, Director of Student Life, said the

InvolveMOUNT platform is "here to stay," providing meeting space for student clubs even when the campus returns to a full-time, in-person schedule. Students on and off campus now have the ability to join club meetings and events, participate in games and workshops— and even earn swag through a program called Marty's Mountain Path. Many of the events can also be found as recordings in case a topic you are interested in does not fit into your schedule.

According to the InvolveMOUNT website, there

are nearly forty clubs available at MWCC. Students can contact any club via email, which will be received by club advisors, faculty, or staff, who will answer questions about participation while off-campus. Club officers can also be contacted directly, as active clubs have an option to email a fellow student holding office, such as president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary.

Whether a student is looking to increase their leadership skills through workshops, attend an evening of games or an hour

of yoga, learn about a new culture, or join a club to expand their network and resume, InvolveMOUNT is available to every MWCC student with access to a computer and internet. Matson has updated the Student Life website with several events lined up for Spring 2022, which will be updated to the InvolveMOUNT platform early in the semester.

Clubs such as the Student Government Association (SGA), provide the opportunity for student voices to be heard by the college's administration—

representing student concerns and cares. SGA President, Stephanie Barry, is a Legal Studies student who has enjoyed becoming more involved in campus activities. As an online learning student who lives in Lowell, the InvolveMOUNT platform has allowed her to become more active in campus life.

"Joining a club makes me feel bigger than myself, that I have a connection to MWCC even

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The LINK program: A Bridge from Highschool Into Adult Life

Transition Coordinator Mindy LeBlanc Explains How High School Students Use the MWCC Campus to Gain Real-World Experience.

By Tarra Kruse

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

The LINK program, through CAPS collaborative Gateway Link School, is an alternative transition program that looks to give students opportunities to gain independence and learn skills that can be applied to their future through experience on the Gardner campus of MWCC.

When transition coordinator of 11 years, Mindy LeBlanc, first started working with the life skills program, they were located at Gardner High School. The students were over the age of 18, and they were taught job skills training. These students watched many friends leave for college their senior year while they had to stay behind, but because they had specialized services, they

had to stay at the high school until they turned 22.

At some point, LeBlanc said she realized that these students wanted to move on as adults, like most kids their age. “They were at their high school, and they

because of the program. They are adults trying to help claim independence, so we’re focusing on vocational, communication, and social skills.”

The students learned life skills while working on the campus by

Facebook page, “students participate in campus clubs, social events, and fitness center activities. In addition, community-based trips allow for skill building in natural settings. Students also have the

maintenance department, and we work with many different divisions on campus. They might help Student Activities pass out packets. The students love doing work like that,” LeBlanc said.

The students in the program, who have an IEP, are eligible for services until their 22nd birthday, whether these services include a career goal or something they enjoy. LeBlanc said this program allows them to achieve their goals through guidance, patience, and understanding.

LeBlanc said that the MWCC staff and students had embraced the students with “open arms” by including them in the college experience. Since then, some students have even enrolled at MWCC to obtain a degree.

“They are adults trying to help claim independence, so we’re focusing on vocational, communication, and social skills.”

– Mindy LeBlanc

were over eighteen and just tired of being at the high school,” LeBlanc said.

LeBlanc said, “Officially, I’m not employed by the college, and my students are not college students, but we have a unique opportunity to build relationships with the faculty and staff on campus and my colleagues

helping the staff; however, due to Covid, many jobs on campus have not been active. Before Covid, these students worked with the drama department helping with flyers or in the cafeteria with anything they might have needed an extra hand with.

According to the LINK

opportunity to increase their vocational skills on campus and in the community with the support of job coaches. Transition skills classes offer instruction on life skills related to adult daily living.”

“We are always looking for new opportunities to learn new skills, and so we work with the

Permanent InvolveMOUNT

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though I’m not on campus,” said Barry. She especially enjoys planning campus events and meeting with students through Kumospace, a virtual community room where the SGA holds office hours to hear about students’ experiences at MWCC.

The InvolveMOUNT platform is a searchable database for all clubs on campus. Students can find groups who share similar interests, as well as join a variety of ongoing activities. While most activities have turned to online platforms, events like orientation, food drives, and fundraisers can still be found around campus throughout the year. On-campus resources for students participating in the Food for Thought Pantry and the Emergency Student Fund are supported each year by clubs hosting fundraisers. Barry encourages students to “help

make these events a success.”

While the SGA is a representative voice for student interests, the Campus Activity Team for Students (CATS) hosts and co-hosts many events which engage the student body. CATS President, Aimee Ouellet, an Early Childhood Education major, has been involved with the club since she started at MWCC in the fall of 2016. Each week, all students are encouraged to join CATS as they meet to discuss upcoming planning for activities and evaluate past event success. The semester is looking to be full of events such as the Welcome Back Fair, Spring Fling, as well as yoga, meditation, Switchboard games, and leadership workshops.

Students who sign up for online events through InvolveMOUNT may receive care packages in the mail, depending on their activity. Whether you want to learn how

to make a birdhouse, show off your jack-o’-lantern carving skills, or receive an event box for Star Wars Day, there are activities for many interests. While Ouellet recognizes that in-person programs are more engaging, the variety of events and times on InvolveMOUNT provide opportunities to join fellow students for an hour of fun, depending on their location and availability.

With nearly forty clubs on campus, there is likely a group that aligns with the interests of many students. If not, students can create their own club! InvolveMOUNT provides a space to meet like-minded people, build rapport with staff or faculty advisors, and strengthen a resume based on activities happening at MWCC. Contact Kathy Matson of the Student Life Office at kmatson1@mwcc.mass.edu for more information.

Have your own opinions on current events, hot-button issues, or events on campus?

Write an opinion piece and send it to

mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu

It may just end up in our next issue!

PROFILE

Profile: Kaitlyn Churcher

Trying to Find the Perfect Balance Between Art and Business

By Mikayla Barrett

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Kaitlyn Churcher, 21, of Leominster, enjoys both art and traveling and has decided to incorporate both into her plans for her major, and future career path.

Churcher graduated from Leominster High School class of 2019 and started her path to college by first attending Worcester State the following fall. COVID-19 hit in the spring of her second semester at Worcester State, and Churcher decided to take a year off.

In the fall of 2021, Churcher started classes at MWCC, taking online courses so she did not “go from 0-100” too quickly—letting herself ease back into a rhythm. Her major is undecided, but she is leaning towards a degree in marketing or communications.

Her love of art has her wanting to pursue a career in advertising. She decided on this career path

because she “did not want to lose her love for art at art school” by making it her livelihood. Churcher enjoys art as a hobby—using acrylics to create her pieces.

Churcher acquired her love of art from her grandfather, who specialized in pencil and charcoals—her first mediums. As she practiced more and more, Churcher began using colored pencils, in addition to her pencil drawings and charcoal. Now she uses paints, acrylic, or watercolor to paint still images of things she finds around the house or online. She describes her art as pop art because she likes to use solid colors and black outlines.

One of Churcher’s best works is a portrait; She said that she is “planning on doing more because [she was] very proud of the one [she] did.”

Churcher’s family has a vacation house in Florida, which helped her decide to transfer to

the University of Tampa after she completes the spring semester. This will allow her to stay close to her family while she is at school and give her a sense of feeling at home. She shared that she is very close with her family and enjoys their time together.

Churcher enjoys traveling and has visited Florida several times in the past couple of years. Churcher enjoys thrift shopping there because “the thrift stores there are better than the ones up here.” Along with thrift shopping, she enjoys going to the beach to enjoy the sun.

There is one beach that Churcher enjoys going to with her dad called Caspersen Beach or “Shark Tooth Beach,” where they find shark teeth in the sand.

When asked why she chose Florida to continue her education, she said that “it’s hard to be sad when it’s sunny all day.”



Photo courtesy of Kaitlyn Churcher

Profile: Mikayla Barrett

Dual-Enrollment Student Has Dreams of Animal Training



Photo courtesy of Mikayla Barrett

By Kaitlyn Churcher

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Mikayla Barrett, a 17-year-old high school senior attending Nashoba Valley Tech, is a busy student who is currently in

the dual-enrollment program, meaning she is taking college courses in addition to her high school courses.

Although she is not yet a full-time college student, Barrett has said that she enjoys her college experience more than her high school experience. She elaborated that the helpful nature of her professors and the convenience of getting college credits done before finishing high school has been a bonus.

When asked if she could trade lives with anyone for a day, Barrett’s answer was simple: “If I could trade lives with anyone for a day, it would be myself. I wouldn’t want to trade lives with anyone.”

Looking back to her freshman year of high school, Barrett realized that she let people take

advantage of her and had a hard time saying no to people. When asked if she could go back and give her younger self advice, Barrett said, “I would tell my freshman self to not let people push me around because I am not having it.” Over the past few years, Barrett has learned to stand up for herself, even if it means losing people along the way.

When Barrett does go to college full-time, she is planning to study animal science, specifically animal behavior. Growing up, Barrett always had pets, including dogs, goats, chickens, and ducks. With her decision to major in animal science, Barrett wants to specialize in animal behavior and become a trainer. Animal training could result in working with police K-9 units,

horses, or service dogs. After having experienced raising her own animals and studying animal behavior, Barrett is considering taking further steps by joining the military as an animal trainer.

Barrett’s decision to consider joining the military comes from her father, a retired medic who served in the United States Army National Guard. Seeing what her father did, Barrett always knew that she would follow in his footsteps in some way. Although she does not want to work in the same field, Barrett does want to serve and help as he did.

Growing up in Millbury and moving to Boxborough at eight-years-old, Barrett has not traveled outside of New England other than Disney World when she was five. When asked where she would travel if she could go

anywhere, she said, “Wherever the military sends me.”

Currently, Barrett works as a lifeguard and a hostess. She enjoys her lifeguarding job more than her hosting job, but she keeps the hostess job to see the other employees and as a source for extra money to put into savings. As for her lifeguarding job, Barrett has recently been promoted to aquatics coordinator, meaning she now supervises other lifeguards and does more administrative work.

Barrett’s busy schedule does not leave her with much free time, but when she finds a free moment she spends it watching movies and going out to eat with her mother, or she will curl up in a comfortable spot and read a book from her collection.

Creative

Writing

Greetings MWCC students,

Moving forward, the Mount Observer will feature a creating writing section spotlighting students' poetry and short stories. In an effort to drive creativity and to interact with our community the paper will also post a writing prompt each month that is selected by random by rolling writing dice. Dice will be rolled to create a prompt for each of the five w's (who, what, when, where, and why); the author will then need to use each of the rolled themes in their creative piece, which should be around 1000 words. When completed, your pieces can be submitted to mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu and the journalism team will choose the most relevant, creative, and polished pieces to publish. All members of the college are encouraged to participate in this activity!

The following prompts for this month are:

- **Who** - Animal
- **What** - Man-Made
- **When** - Past
- **Where** - Underground
- **Why** - Dream

I feel some very creative possibilities with these rolls! Maybe a long time ago, an animal faction was created through a man-made event, and the animals preside underground in an attempt to escape a pandemic that forced the living into a dream state. Perhaps an animal dreams of a reoccurring past event, and it inspires them to search for a great underground location- a man-made tomb that will unite man and animals alike.

Best of luck with your pieces! The Mount Observer Team looks forward to reading your work!

Let Your Voice be Heard!

Send your stories, poetry, artwork, photography, or other content to

mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu

When Opportunity Brings Bliss

By Nadia Noushie

Life is not always easy but with a positive mind, we can always see the joy in the simplest things around us.

I took a walk down my neighborhood in a small town called Abelempke, in Accra. Accra is the capital city of Ghana. Ghana is a beautiful country located in West Africa. So after six years of being away from Ghana, I visited recently.

Walking down the road, I saw a lot of kids running down the street in torn outfits and playing with toys they made out of old boxes and containers. All I saw in their face was pure bliss! It then occurred to me that even though they are not as privileged as some kids in the city or the Western world, they find happiness in building their own toys and running around with no shoes on.

I asked them a few questions, like how they built cars from old boxes and containers, and their response was “our parents cannot afford to buy us toys but they can get us old boxes and empty containers to play with. We use our imagination to build our favorite toys.”

I was appalled by their response. I left the scene thinking about how these kids could be great engineers, architects, or scientists in the future. Not only did they appreciate their old boxes and containers, but they also make use of their imaginative skills.

We must always be grateful for the little pleasures we have in life, and sometimes when life gets rough, we should remember that there is always beauty in the worst places of life. I learned a lesson that no matter what situation one finds himself in, make sure you are able to build something beautiful out of old boxes and empty containers.

For Better Changes

By Amanda Fales

To the Horse Lady,

I see you each day walking to your stable. Two times a day, every day, I watch you make the trek through your tall lawn. You carry big buckets of feed and water, ready for the hungry animal awaiting you.

I used to hear three different noises at night, one for each animal you had. Now I only hear one. There was one from Blue, the tiny Shetland pony. He was your best friend. Another from Traveler, the old horse who Blue always mirrored. Last, but not least, Spanky. It seems the small white goat never knew he could mean so much to someone. I’ve noticed that he is now a source of joy as well as comfort. I hear his cries at night, and I know that he’s in pain too.

When I asked you what your next plans were, you smiled and stated, “I’m going anywhere that’s warm.” I wondered if new animals were included in your plans. As though you read my mind, you said, “animals follow me wherever I go, if not, I must get more.” We both laughed and acknowledged the truth behind it.

I’ve lived across from you for ten years, and I’ve never seen you without a little friend trailing behind you. I’ve never imagined you without one. I’ve seen the “for sale” sign placed in front of your house. I recognize what this means. You’re going somewhere warm and finding friends along the way.

You, Traveler, Blue, and Spanky have been my friends for years. I know that change happens, for better or worse. I know yours is for the better. You and Spanky will make more memories and more animal friends with time, but I will never forget seeing you walk to your stable each day.

Perseverance and Motivation

By Skyler Elliott

Recently in the neighborhood, one of the apartments in a nearby building has been under construction. There are two men who work long hours to get the renovation done. They spend much of their time performing exhaustive and tedious tasks. The laborious hours take their toll on them as they both carry heavy buckets of equipment up and down the flights of stairs.

For many, the day has come to an end. The sun is down, the cold air moves in, but these men remain hard at work. As the snowstorms arrive, they shift away from their construction work and begin to prepare for what else is to come. Covered in dust and dried paint, they layer up to combat the cold. The snowblowers roar and the salt cascades across the ground.

They shiver in the cold breeze, but still, they persevere. They want to try to make the property as safe as they can for their tenants, but there’s something more than that driving them. They put in these long laborious hours so that they can provide. Provide for themselves and provide for their families.

The real story here is brought on by a single question, what drives anyone to work as hard as they do? Everyone has something that motivates them to succeed, and inspiration is hidden in every neighborhood. Sometimes, it just takes a walk around the block to find it.

Tangerine Summer

By Cody Nathanson

She drags the stool across the kitchen, vibrating against the tiles as it moves.

With her eyes now above the counter, but beneath the bowl, she reaches out.

Confident, she now holds the orange with both hands, jumping from the stool.

As She now moves, so does her finger across the rind, looking for her nail to catch.

Moving between the divide, her foot quickly finds the lip of the door frame.

Catching herself, both hands now braced against the frame, she stands.

She gives off a light breath, then another.

For across the room— on the armchair—the orange now sits.

Slowly dragging her feet across the carpet, she brings herself in front of the chair.

Leering down, she reaches, quickly grabbing the orange.

As she starts to move, she pauses, then, with orange in hand, she looks around the room.

Waiting, before pulling herself onto the armchair, where she sits.

Her smile fades, the fabric is as thin as the rose petals printed on them. She shifts, but the enormous springs stay with her.

Lax staples sting her arm.

The smell of oranges fills the air.

Looking down, she sees what’s left of the orange’s rind, now scattered around her lap.

Bouncing down onto her feet, she quickly sweeps them onto her shirt.

Making sure to leave nothing behind, she heads back to the kitchen.

This time, minding her step.

The Clay Woman Rag Doll

By Cami Stephens

I saw him yesterday, forming his clay model

She's a beautiful being, something otherworldly.
I see her next to him, peering over his shoulder as he tries to
recreate a version of her.

She smiles at him and places her hand delicately on the back of his
overly-heated neck.
She knows he can't make another version of her.

He ignores her kind gestures and only focuses on his clay model.
He spends hours forming his clay model, aimlessly wishing it could
look like her.

The heat on his neck rushes through his body with intense passion.
The more he tries to shape the clay model, the more the clay morphs
into something different.

Yet, he still tries to make another version of her.

He turns around, feeling the abandonment of her hand on his neck.
She is nowhere to be found.

The heat on his neck turns ice-cold.

The clay model smiles at him, trying to emulate her.

The clay model tries to remember the training he put her through; so
it could be exactly like her.

He turns around and yells her name.

The clay model answers, but she is nowhere to be found.

He realized he spent so much time trying to create a model, that he
missed out on the original.

The clay model desperately tries to become her, mimicking her
movement and mannerism.

Even the clay model knows it cannot be her.

He closes his eyes, wishing he could still feel her lukewarm touch
against his scorching skin.

He is now stuck with the clay model because he let the real one
getaway.

He touches the model, desperately trying to feel what he felt for her.

The touch feels ice-cold, nothing like her touch.

The clay model begins to cry, knowing that it will never live up to her.

He accepts his fate; she is gone forever.

He now touches the frigid clay model, but still thinks about her warm
demeanor.

He thinks about her smile, the way they laughed together, the
moments they shared.

But he is with the clay model who is just a lonesome shadow of her.

He now knows she is something that can't be replaced.

Beyond Conversation

By Mackenzie Hosley

To the Man Who Sits on His Porch every day,

Every day I pass your house right before I approach my apartment,
and every day I see you sitting there on your porch. I see you sit,
smile, and watch the cars go by while the sun dips further and
further down the skyline until the only light is the moonlight and the
few streetlights that are still running in our neighborhood.

Some days we catch each other's eyes and both share a small yet
genuine smirk, but some days we are just strangers passing each
other. I have never met you and I couldn't tell anyone who asks what
your name is, but I know you sit on that porch every day and just
enjoy the fresh air and the sights of the beautiful planet we live on.

You remind me that there is life behind every door I pass, and
though I may see you, I may never even know your name. We are
all just human beings with our own set of baggage, our own sets of
dreams, and our own individual lives.

To the man who sits on his porch every day, you remind me to be
kind to every soul I meet because I don't know what lives beyond the
small conversations between strangers.

By Cami Stephens

I remember the first day you bought me.

"Look how pretty that doll is! I want her!"

Your eyes widened with passion and infatuation.

If only I knew that passion would be influenced by fiery.

I remember the day you took me out of the box,

You brushed my long blonde hair and told me how beautiful I was.

You couldn't stop showing your friends and family your new, unused
rag doll.

"She's so precious! I love her!" is what you say- while you look at me
with obsession.

Each day, your touch became more influenced by love, you couldn't
stop it.

"I love you, I love you, I love you!" you chant into my ear, while only
focusing on my beauty.

"Did I tell you how much I love you?"

I have never seen someone love a rag doll like me, as much as you did.

One day, you silently put me in your box.

I screeched at you in agony,

Why was I in the box again?

I guess a rag doll like me is too unimportant to know the truth.

You looked at me one last time before putting me in a dark corner.

Your eyes filled with tears, but somehow it felt so fictitious.

You gave my hair one more gentle brush, yet it felt like you pulled every
strand viciously out.

You closed the box, making sure it covered my mouth so I couldn't ask
why.

Through the clear packing of the box, I saw you.

You threw this rag doll out, so you could get a new, improved one.

"I love you, I love you, I love you!" is what you say to the new doll.

You just opened her box, how do you already love a new doll?

I'm here in the box still.

Occasionally I hear you say, "I love you" to her, I think about the day
you got me.

Now when people ask about me, you say "oh her? That's just the old,
crazy rag doll"

And then you bombard them with your new doll.

Ghost

By Maddie Willigar

A chill still haunts my lungs from the words I never spoke.

They blew mistily through the air and carried weightless in the cold
because though I walked through walls for you, I was always just a
ghost.

Like an empty figure walking past your screens of smoke,
digging beneath your fire to find bits of treasured gold,
a chill still haunts my lungs for the words I never spoke.

Buried with my bones will be pieces that you broke
and left to sit in damp and filth, as they waste and rot and mold
because though I walked through walls for you, I was always just a
ghost.

But couldn't you see your wind revealed the form beneath my cloak?
The candles you blew out to prove the fire you withhold
left a chill that haunts my lungs like the words I never spoke.

I never dared to say these words for fear it would provoke
the beast that hides within the woods and howls to be consoled
because though I walked through walls for you, I was always just a
ghost.

I wonder if days down the line, I'll learn to clear my throat
and remove the bits of smoke you left in every inch of this household.
But for now, a chill still haunts my lungs from words I never spoke
because though I walked through walls for you, I was always just a
ghost.

Review: *The Book of Boba Fett*

The Middling Adventures of *Star Wars*' Original Mystery Man(dalorian)



Image from IMDB, copyright Lucasfilm Ltd. and The Walt Disney Company

By **Thomas Hill Jr.**
OBSERVER DESIGNER

Disney and Lucasfilm's third foray into the live-action *Star Wars* series (after two seasons of *The Mandalorian*) brings us *The Book of Boba Fett*. Acting as a sort of sequel/spin-off of *The Mandalorian*, *Boba Fett* follows the titular bounty hunter as he attempts to take over the criminal empire built by the now-deceased Jabba the Hutt on desert planet Tatooine and turn it to his own devices. To do so, he must build a team of other bounty hunters, gangs, and Tatooine's own denizens to chase off rival crime lords looking to take a piece of the pie, including the spice-dealing

Pyke Syndicate (drug dealers, essentially) and Jabba's own family. On the surface, this seems like an intriguing set-up; a deep dive into the seedy underbelly and criminal politics of the *Star Wars* galaxy. Unfortunately, the execution of this idea leaves quite a bit to be desired.

To start off with some positives, the effects are great and at least on par with *The Mandalorian* (which you would hope, seeing as it is the same team behind both shows). All the droids, creatures, ships, costumes, props look wonderful and the show perfectly blends computer-generated effects with practical props and puppets. The music is also quite good, using themes

written by Ludwig Göransson (from *The Mandalorian*) and everything else composed by Joseph Shirley. The main theme of the show is just as catchy as Mando's, and I'd find myself humming it around the house while working on other things.

However, pretty music and effects alone are not enough to make a compelling TV show and is to be expected from a franchise as large as *Star Wars*, backed by a company as large as Disney. It's the story and characters, ostensibly, that get the audience invested, and this is unfortunately where *Boba Fett* stumbles.

Starting with characters I liked; I enjoyed Ming-Na Wen's returning character Fennec Shand, Boba Fett's right-hand. I like her dry wit and her loyalty, as well as her competence (in some ways proving to be better at this whole coup thing than Boba). Despite not learning a lot about her backstory, I enjoyed when she was on-screen (though this makes me wonder how much I enjoyed the writing of Fennec's character, and how much Ming-Na Wen's charisma just sold the part; who can say?).

I also enjoyed the live-action introduction of Black Krrsantan, the hulking Wookiee bounty hunter from the *Star Wars* comics, played by Carey Jones. He's like an angry, brooding Chewbacca, but very fun to watch, and very expressive due to added animatronics in the costume's mask that allowed for his eyebrows to raise and furrow—giving just that extra bit of “humanity” (“Wookiee-manity?”) to the character. There are also various droids and side characters I found amusing or interesting, as well as some returning characters that I like, but that's delving too deep into

spoiler territory. The rest of the cast just wasn't very interesting to me, and in some cases, actively annoyed me.

You may have noticed that Boba Fett wasn't really mentioned here, and that's because there isn't a whole lot to say about his actual character that isn't just plot-related. He has a sense of honor, but also wants to take over as crime lord on this back-water desert world. He can be brutal in a fight, but stunningly incompetent in many other matters. He wants to create a new system for bounty hunters so that they don't end up working for idiots but doesn't really lay out how that would work or be different from the already-existing Bounty Hunter's Guild. Temuera Morrison's acting is fine, and I like him in the role; I just wish the actual character writing were stronger. It doesn't help that he only gets five out of the seven episodes of *his own series* to show any development or growth.

This brings us to the story side of things. *The Book of Boba Fett* is broken up in a very odd way, jumping back and forth between the present, showing Boba Fett and Fennec Shand's attempts to take over Jabba's domain, and the past, showing how Boba Fett survived his “death” in 1983's *Return of the Jedi*. Then moving to the point that we next saw him in *The Mandalorian* Season Two.

On top of trying to tell these two stories, episodes five and six take a detour to a story pretty much completely unrelated to Boba's adventures on Tatooine, to the point where he doesn't even appear in episode five at all! While these two episodes were very entertaining and involved characters I liked and built on a story I cared about, they probably should have just been saved for another show. Instead, that time should have been used to develop the plot and characters of *this* show.

Overall, *The Book of Boba Fett* is a very pretty, very messy series that struggles with what it wants to be; does it want to be a solemn character piece about Boba Fett, does it want to be an ensemble “putting the team together” series, a look at the politics and crime on the outskirts of the galaxy, a sequel, a spin-off, a prequel? It tries to be all of these things, teasing many separate, interesting “what-ifs,” but sadly not coalescing into a single, cohesive whole. Hopefully, these experiments with the *Star Wars* galaxy provide a lesson to the creative team behind them; sometimes simpler is better.

Oh, also, the final episode is one of the most ridiculously weird things I've ever seen in *Star Wars* (at least in live-action), so if “so bad it's good” is to your liking, maybe check that out!

We Want You

to send in your artwork, photography, poetry, short stories, comics, and more!

Want to show off your creative abilities? Then this spot is for you!
Just send your content to

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Review: Don't Look Up

The Satirical Film That is Shockingly Surreal



Image copyright Netflix

By Cami Stephens

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Adam McKay's movie *Don't Look Up*, portrays a star-studded cast that deals with dire real-world issues. *Don't Look Up* is about two scientists Kate Dibiasky (played by Jennifer Lawrence), and Dr. Randall Mindy (played by Leonardo DiCaprio), who discover a comet that could destroy humanity. The comet, named Dibiasky's, is quickly realized to be an imminent threat to earth. The satirical movie depicts how society and the government overlook a near-fatal predicament. The movie's inclusion of possible real-life occurrences mixed with satirical comedy is ingenious, and something utterly captivating. In some scenes, the film is comical, while in others, the movie is immensely horrifying.

One of the movie's focal theme is how people are not taking the comet seriously. When astronomers Kate and Dr. Randall discover the comet, they are shocked and want to spread

awareness, so they attempt to broadcast their message on the news. When Kate and Dr. Randall present their evidence of the comet, they are met with peculiar reactions from news anchors Brie Evantee (played by Cate Blanchett) and Jack Bremmer (played by Tyler Perry). The news anchors are astonished by the comet, not because of how frightening it is, but rather they are concerned with its aesthetics of it. For instance, the comet is named after Kate, and the news anchors Jack and Brie congratulate her, instead of focusing on the issue at hand. Both Jack and Brie ask ignorant questions that make the comet sound as if it's insignificant.

Despite Jack and Brie making a mockery out of comet Dibiasky, they are incredibly more attentive to famous singer Riley Bina (played by Ariana Grande) and her ex-boyfriend DJ Cello's (played by Kid Cudi) relationship troubles. This scene is a direct satirical parallel of how society reacts

to pop culture versus important real-world issues, like climate change. Today, we are struggling with climate issues, but the news is bombarded with the newest celebrity drama, and Jack and Brie are prime examples of society's priorities.

In an interview with *Netflix*, actor Leonardo DiCaprio, gave a brief summary of what *Don't Look Up* is about, and he stated that "...an analogy of modern-day culture and our inability to hear and listen to the scientific truth." DiCaprio's perspective on what the movie means is completely accurate, as most people did not want to hear about Kate and Dr. Randall's findings. Furthermore, in the movie Brie Evantee says "Well... it's just something we do around here. Keep the bad news light," which asserts the idea that some people would rather turn their backs on a prevalent issue, so they don't have to digest the hard truth.

The theme of government is prevalent with the character President Janie Orlean, who completely disputes comet Dibiasky, like Brie and Jack. Orlean only cares about the comet when it is convenient for her, as her image is her primary priority. Although she initially agreed to help Kate and Randall destroy the comet, President Orlean abandons the plan to work with Peter Isherwell (played by Mark Rylance), who is the CEO of a cellular company called BASH.

Peter Isherwell seems to be the personification of large corporations that profit immensely from society. Isherwell discovers that there are profitable minerals, which is a motive for why Orlean abandons the original plan. This further illustrates the government making decisions, not for the benefit of humanity, but for their own self-interests. Isherwell's plan consists of using BEADs (an acronym for BASH Explore and Acquire Drones) and proposes that these drones will attach to the comet and split the comet

into smaller pieces. Isherwell's proposal comes off as a perfect plan, however, it has not been peer-reviewed. As a result, Isherwell's BEADS operations are completely unsuccessful, and as the scientists predicted, comet Dibiasky strikes the earth. The planet is destroyed, and people who are in high societal positions, like President Orlean and Peter Isherwell, escape in a spaceship.

The entire movie was so intriguing because I did not know how to feel throughout watching the film. Actor Rob Morgan's (who plays Dr. Teddy Oglethorpe), final scene was the most memorable for me and utterly bone-chilling. As, Kate, Dr. Randall, Kate's love interest, Yule, all go to Dr. Randall's home where they have their final meal with Randall's family the world ends in the most realistic fashion. The facial expressions of Dr. Oglethorpe, as the comet was hitting the house, made me audibly gasp out of fear. The movie seemed so realistic that I was left feeling shocked.

Despite the movie being written before the COVID-19 outbreak, there was a deep correlation between the movie and the pandemic, which makes the movie feel all that more real. Every detail of people not taking the comet or scientists seriously, big corporations profiting from the comet and society structures, and the government overall— all related to the pandemic, the only difference is that the movie was about a comet.

Don't Look Up is easily one of the best movies I have ever seen. With elements of comedy, drama, and horror, it has a genre for everyone. The movie is incredibly eye-opening to the operations of the government, the people's priorities, and the lack of care for the environment. *Don't Look Up* is a must-see film, one that provokes thought and self-reflection, not a film that just solely exists for entertainment.