

The Mount Observer

“Voices of the students of Mount Wachusett Community College”

PREVIEWS

Graduation in the Age of Quarantine...

Follow the link below to view the Virtual Commencement Ceremony Wednesday, May 20 at 6PM

mwcc.edu/live-tv

Who's Missing in Massachusetts?

NamUs claims that over 600,000 people are reported missing a year in the US even though most are closed tens of thousands of people are never found.. For the full article, see page 3

Working From Home Photo Spread

Check out how your fellow students and faculty are making things work...from home.

For the full photo spread, see pages 5-7

Reviews: Good News and New Horizons

See what we thought of John Krasinski's new YouTube series, plus Nintendo's latest entry in the Animal Crossing franchise For the full articles, see page 12



Coming Soon to a Screen Near You: 2020 Commencement

President and Dean of Students offer insights into upcoming virtual ceremony

By Claire Higginson
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Due to the spread of COVID-19, MWCC has not only decided to shut down classes for the rest of the semester, but all in-person activities as well, including the Commencement Ceremony for the Class of 2020.

“The decision not to have an in-person commencement was the most difficult decision I’ve had to make,” said MWCC President James Vander Hooven.

“I never imagined a scenario where we would not have an in-person commencement, however, given the circumstances we are facing, I can see no other option that will maximize the health and safety



Images from pexels

MWCC's 2020 Commencement will be held virtually, viewable via livestreaming on Wednesday, May 20 at 6PM, with Gateway/Pathways Graduation on Friday, May 22 at 12PM.

of our students, their families, the faculty, and staff.” President Vander Hooven explained that simply postponing the ceremonies to a later date was not a realistic option. With the nature of the

virus, there is no assurance that such a large ceremony could be held within a month or two. Waiting longer than that would be difficult because the graduated students will have dispersed and moved on to new

areas and responsibilities. Jason Zelesky, Dean of Students, has been working hard with President Vander Hooven and a team of media **continued on page 2**
“Virtual Commencement” >>>

Renovations Planned for Future Trade Programs

President Vander Hooven discusses plans to add trade facilities to Mount Fitness

By Peter Edwards
Observer Contributor

Enrollment has been steadily dropping over the last several semesters at smaller colleges and universities across Massachusetts, including Mount Wachusett Community College. School officials and MWCC President James Vander Hooven have been searching for solutions to the problem.

Recently, MWCC applied for a \$20 million grant to cover the cost of renovations to the Fitness Center, adding trade classrooms in much of the underutilized gym space and revamping the gym itself. The National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine predict that there will be a shortage of 3.4 million trade workers by 2022.

President Vander Hooven said that MWCC will offer a more in-depth presentation of the trades, as well as give people the chance to become educated in the trade field of their choice if they didn't go to a trade high school. Vander Hooven also said there is a need for trade classes at a college level because trades are becoming increasingly more

complex and skill-oriented. If the grant is approved this summer, the program will be called the “Center for Technical Education and Skilled Trades.” The program will offer classes for most traditional trades, such as electrical, plumbing, pipefitting, and construction courses, as well as opportunities **continued on page 3**
“Trade Programs” >>>

Virtual Commencement

>>> continued from page 1

specialists to plan the event. The ceremony will now be filmed using the MWCC's media and television studio and will be edited together prior to being aired on May 20th at 6 p.m., the same time and date as the usual in-person commencement ceremony.

Filming has been taking place for several weeks and will continue up until a few days before the ceremony airs. In order to maintain maximum safety guidelines in light of the pandemic, each presenter will speak in the studio alone, then the studio will be cleaned thoroughly before filming the next speaker. The recordings will then be edited together to follow the exact same format and flow of in-person commencement. The names of graduates will be read aloud and will scroll across the screen as the ceremony progresses.

The ceremony will still

have a student speaker, who is yet to be determined, and a commencement speaker, Maria Vazquez, a local speaker and empowerment coach.

Vazquez's speech will be about strength, perseverance, and empathy as she encourages students to look at the situation from a more positive perspective.

"When I was informed that the graduation was going to be done virtually, I was excited to know that the college was dedicated to creating an event to celebrate the students," said Vazquez. "In times like these, we have to be willing to adapt."

The Gateway and Pathways Graduation Ceremony will be created in the same manner and aired on May 29th.

Nursing and Dental program Pinning Ceremonies have been postponed to a later date until it is safe to do them in person, possibly as early as the fall.

In order to be as accommodating as possible, Zelesky said that

graduating students will receive a Commencement Packet on May 15th, which includes a cap and gown, their diploma cover, a commemorative commencement program, and a few special gifts from MWCC.

"We hope that students will celebrate with their families, wear their cap and gown in their living rooms, take photos and enjoy the ceremony in the comfort and safety of their homes," said Zelesky.

"We know that this is not ideal, but we also want it to be special. Our graduates have worked hard to get to this place, and a team of folks at MWCC have been working hard to make this a special event."

If any students still wish to walk across the stage in person, MWCC is also offering any of this year's graduates the option to walk during the 2021 in-person Commencement next May.

Mental Health Counseling Services Go Remote

Melissa Manzi offers advice to students seeking mental health support



Image from MWCC

MWCC Mental Health Counselor Melissa Manzi

By Peter Edwards

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Melissa Manzi, MWCC's Mental Health Counselor, recently highlighted the telehealth counseling services that are available for all students as well as some advice in how to

cope with the drastic changes in all of our lives. Manzi said she is doing everything she can to provide the necessary services and advice to aid students who are struggling during these times.

Manzi is available from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays, providing counseling and support through phone calls or Zoom meetings. Manzi said she assists students with guidance, direction, and tips to hopefully relieve academic stresses. Students can contact Manzi at M_manzi@mwcc.mass.edu with the subject line "counseling" if they would like to make an appointment. More information about accessing mental health resources can be found by clicking the Covid-19 banner on iConnect and selecting the "Health, Housing and Food" category.

Manzi said most of the students seeking counseling have come to her with newly

found academic struggles. With fewer resources available due to absence of classroom time to collaborate with other students and professors, in addition to drastic changes in structure and format, many students are struggling to keep up with the workload.

Manzi also said that in some cases students aren't aware that online tutoring is still available through MWCC, either by email, phone, or video conference. Manzi said that students just need to email the Academic Support Center at asc@mwcc.mass.edu and include their name, ID number, class, a brief description of the assignment, the paper or project for review, and the tutoring format you'd like partake in.

Manzi also discussed some ways to relieve stress and

continued on page 3
"Remote Counseling" >>>

Self-Care for a Successful Finals Season

Experts share tips for end-of-semester stress relief



Image by Dennis Ottink on Unsplash

A quiet walk is a good way to de-stress.

By Marissa Shea

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

With the COVID-19 pandemic, and the move to online instruction, and final exams approaching, many students are more stressed than ever. In this article, three experts will provide advice on how to make it through finals season with self-care tips such as getting enough sleep, exercising, and rewarding yourself for your accomplishments.

Melissa Manzi, the school's mental health counselor, is available remotely for all students through phone calls or Zoom counseling sessions. Manzi specializes in helping students deal with problems, especially stress. She is often very busy helping students, so it is usually best to make an

"When you write things down it tends to relieve the stress by just seeing where you can put it," said Manzi. "A lot of times students are so overwhelmed, they are not sure what their week looks like, when they're going to do assignments, or what they need to do."

Manzi also stressed that students need to get enough sleep, especially before exams. Many students develop the habit of cramming before an exam. According to Manzi, this is not the best idea and students need to get a healthy amount of sleep.

"If there's one thing I could recommend to students, it's to get sufficient sleep because everything your brain and body need is replenished during sleep and there are numerous studies

"A lot of times students are so overwhelmed, they are not sure what their week looks like, when they're going to do assignments, or what they need to do."

– Melissa Manzi

appointment through iConnect or by email at M_manzi@mass.mwcc.edu.

Manzi has several tips to help students manage stress, especially during finals season. She recommends that students create a very specific schedule for themselves, down to the hour, of each task they need to do.

showing that when students don't get enough sleep, they don't do as well on their exams," Manzi said.

Kristen Hickey, an instructor in the Practical Nursing Program, also has several tips on surviving final exams in the

continued on page 3
"Stressful Finals" >>>

Remote Counseling

>>> continued from page 2

maintain as much structure to your day as possible. She's been advising students to figure out "what's in your control and what's out of your control." Manzi said trying to stick to that mindset will go a long way.

She also recommends trying to stay away from news feeds as much as possible.

"With all of the negativity on the news and all of the terrible things happening it's easy to get consumed with worry," she said.

In terms of building things into your schedule to help with

mental health issues or just to live a more enriched life, Manzi suggested daily meditation and relaxation techniques, guided imagery meditation (which can also be found under the COVID-19 banner on iConnect), and spending time outdoors, whether it be a run, hike, or just a simple 10-minute walk. Getting out of the house, and spending some time in nature is shown to improve mood and reduce stress. She also recommends finding a specific place to study and work in an attempt to separate it from your day-to-day life at home.

Stressful Finals

>>> continued from page 2

nursing program.

Hickey said, "I definitely think self-care is vital to making it through the nursing program, and exercising, even if it's walking for ten or fifteen minutes every day, making sure to eat right, getting enough sleep, as well as taking time to do something you enjoy."

According to Hickey, students become so stressed with completing assignments on time and passing their classes that they forget to take care of themselves.

"Do not try and power study through things," she said. "Work out a schedule when you are going to study, and hopefully by doing some of these stress relievers and incorporating

that into your routine it will be helpful"

Candela Trillas, a nineteen-year-old business major, said "finals are always the hardest time of the year for me. I am working two jobs, taking five classes and trying to complete all my assignments on time. The stress of everything can quickly become overwhelming."

According to Trillas, it is important to reward yourself when you have accomplished your goals.

"When I finish an assignment, or have been working on homework for a few hours, I reward myself with my favorite snack or by watching something on Netflix. This makes studying a little bit more bearable."

Who's Missing in Massachusetts?

How one MWCC student is helping to find missing people



Image by Ehimetalor Akhere Unuabona

By Dylan Quigley

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

NamUs claims that over 600,000 people are reported missing a year in the US even though most are closed tens of thousands of people are never found. Police departments are overwhelmed as it is and to constantly be looking for missing persons is not always possible; especially in heavily populated areas with other problems that need the attention of the police. One may ask if there isn't something concerned citizens could do? Well with the ever-growing reach of social media maybe there is something we can do.

Helena Carter who earned her paralegal certificate in December of 2019 and is now working on an associate's degree in legal studies at MWCC also thought of this and in 2009 she started a Facebook page called Massachusetts Missing. She posts missing person fliers on the page and updates each case when it's needed.

Carter has gotten shares from

all over the country and even aided in the reunion of some loved ones. For example, a father reached out when his twins went missing due to a custodial kidnapping and through shares on the page the twins were found and returned safely to their father who still credits the page to this day.

Carter focuses on people from MA. that go missing, and family members or friends of the missing person usually contact Carter to make the Facebook post. As the post is shared and reposted, it reaches more and more people, and if someone thinks they may have seen the missing person, authorities are notified. Something that Carter does is take missing person reports concerning drug addicted missing persons, in many cases police will not take these reports.

Although the page is shared throughout the country it is usually former MA. residents who are sharing the page in other states. Carter claimed that if every state had its own missing persons page, the outreach would

be far greater than what her page can do. She continued that yes there are national databases but there is so many cases that a state by state database would be more effective. Carter also said that these databases need to be updated on the closing of cases; as of now there is not really a way to tell who is being found and sometimes missing person posts are still being shared even though the person has come home.

Carter explained that most missing person cases do have a positive outcome but for the ones that do not get closed more could be done. To help with missing persons cases Carters dream is to get Massachusetts Missing into its own building with a centralized database that updates each case when the person is found or not. The link to Carters Facebook page is facebook.com/brockton.masspmc/ and for cases that are out of state go to missingkids.com as that is the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Trade Programs

>>> continued from page 1

to explore the business management side of these trades.

The program will partner with trade unions, the Chamber of Commerce, and regional employers to provide programmatic advising and to create a pipeline for apprenticeships and employment, President Vander Hooven explained.

When fully renovated, the new Trade Center will feature

three 2400-square-foot shop/lab spaces, three general-purpose classrooms, a 100-seat lecture hall, three faculty offices, a student locker room/changing room, a library, three study rooms, and two conference rooms. This construction is scheduled to begin in the summer of 2022 and will hopefully be completed by the summer of 2024.

President Vander Hooven said that the Fitness Center will also reap the benefits from these

renovations. A loss of two of the three basketball courts will take place but the equipment, the locker rooms, and the other aspects of the gym will receive much-needed updates as well as renovations.

New studios for fitness classes, a potential update to the basketball court, and complete renovation of the locker rooms will be some of the notable changes.

Stressed?

Overwhelmed?

Feeling Down?

If finals week is getting to you, or 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

Aiding Students Through These Tough Times

How the Visions Program has adapted to supporting students remotely

By *Velhelmina Ako*

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

The Visions Program provides students from lower income homes, first generation college students, and students with disabilities with academic and community support. *Observer* contributor Velhelmina Ako interviewed Visions' Academic and Transfer Counselor, Sarah Pingeton, to discuss how the Program has adapted to providing their services despite the closure of the campus during these troubling times.

Velhelmina Ako: Students in the Visions program receive a lot of support in terms of tutoring and counseling and advising. How are these services transitioning to a web format?

Sarah Pingeton: It's going better than I thought. We are operating mostly with Zoom and we're able to do one-on-one, offering "walk-in" office hours through Zoom with Kayla (our front-line staff) to have quick questions answered or to easily schedule appointments. We're also doing plenty of email and

phone calls, and we have the ability to text through a google voice account, so we're staying really connected to students and offering all the services we normally do.

A: Is all the activity planned for this year, such as seminars, cancelled?

P: We have been able to keep some of the seminars and substitute others. Seminars are available through Zoom and invites are going out on Facebook and via Email. We've been able to add seminars about time management during this transition, open chat times, and now we're doing a wellness week with some exercise and stress management sessions.

A: During the school year, Visions let students sign out laptops. What happens now for students who don't have access to complete assignments at home?

P: We still have laptops available! Not all laptops were signed out when we went remote, and a couple of students have taken advantage of the

opportunity to do a safe-distance pick up to get a laptop if they've needed it. Additionally, the college has chrome books and hotspots available for students who need computers or internet access, so that can be taken advantage of, too.

A: How are services provided for students with learning disabilities?

P: Students with learning disabilities have been connecting with Dawn, Amy, and Ann from Disability Services to come up with ways to provide all of the services that are normally provided. This is definitely one of the hardest parts of moving remote with such little notice and I hope students are asking for help and getting everything they need.

A: What do you like/dislike about online counseling?

P: I like that it works! When a student can connect with video and audio, we can have a conversation that's really similar to what we might have had in-person, and I think that face-to-face connection helps

me and the students feel less isolated. It's also usually way faster to have a meeting than to email back and forth. I don't like that students can't just pop their head in for a quick question or to give me an update about how a project or test went or to tell me about their 4-year college acceptances. This time of year is supposed to be about celebration and accomplishments, and that's really missing. Online counseling is also tough when there are tech problems and you waste a whole meeting block trying to troubleshoot rather than getting anything accomplished or having a conversation.

A: Has this pandemic given the program a different perspective/approach on having a backup plan in case something like this happens again in the future?

P: I think we're kind of learning as we go and taking lessons for if and when there ever is a next time. We were lucky to have had a staff meeting right before the campus closed, where we discussed a game-plan, so we had that space to come up with ideas

rather than having to do it all on-the-fly after the fact. Luckily, we live in a time where we have the technology to support a fairly seamless transition. If this were even 10 years ago, it would be way, way harder or impossible to move our services remote in a meaningful way.

A: What do you hope to gain from this experience?

P: I hope I'm gaining some appreciation! I never thought I'd miss my desk chair with the broken wheel I always complained about quite so much, but man would it be heaven compared to the dining room chair I'm using now. All those little things were really easy to take for granted. I also hope we'll all be a little more adaptable after this.

A: How Is the annual awards ceremony going to be held this year?

P: We're working on it! The plan right now is to pre-record a virtual ceremony that is as close to the real thing as possible and mail all the invitations and awards.

Students Face New Challenges After Campus Closures

Two students discuss the transition to online-only instruction

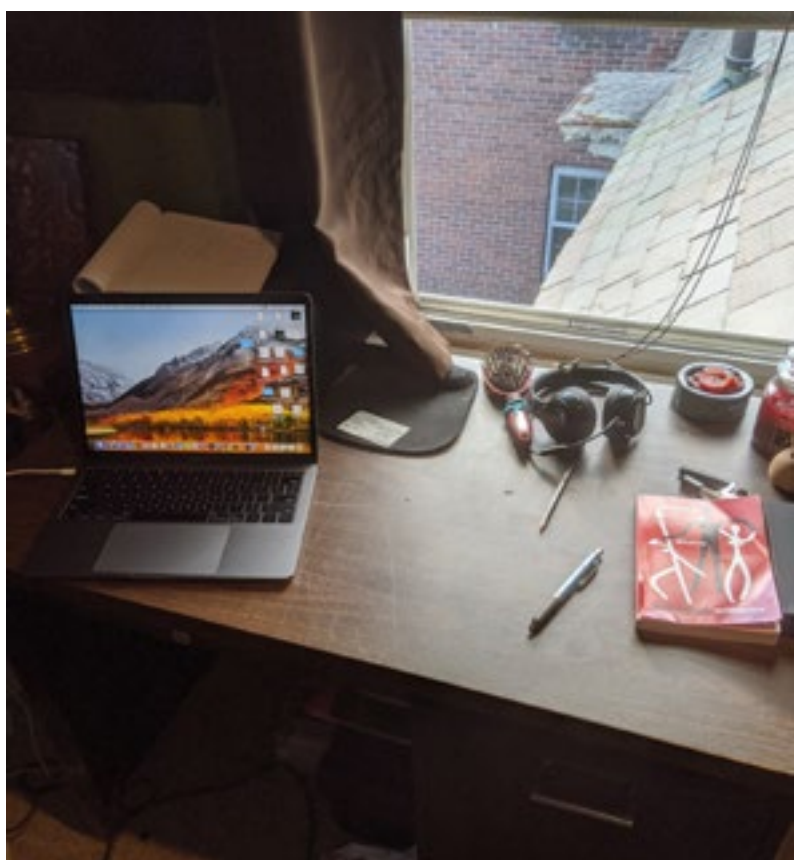


Photo by Dylan Quigley

Quigley's current "Work from Home" set-up.

By *Jayden Hooper*

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Students at the Mount are facing unique and unforeseen challenges as a result of the move to online instruction and are attempting to adjust to their new day-to-day lives.

Dylan Quigley, 21, is a liberal arts major in his second semester. He is currently taking two classes while also working full time. He said that switching to online classes is a "big change" that takes a while to get used to.

Quigley said that one of his biggest struggles is keeping track of deadlines and staying on top of assignments. He explained that it was easier when he could "talk to teachers face-to-face" about homework and upcoming due dates.

When asked about what part of campus life he misses the most, Quigley said he misses interacting with friends and fellow students. He stated that "everyone's in a good mood" at the Mount and he enjoys being a part of the community. Additionally, he always loved to walk through the art wing and look at the art displayed there.

Quigley said that he encourages all students to reach out if they are having a difficult time, and expressed that it is important to stay in contact with other people to keep the community going despite the campus being closed.

Celeste Infantino, 24, is a Business major in her first semester and is currently taking 3 classes. She said that she is still trying to adjust to all the changes

and stick to a daily schedule.

She said her greatest struggle has been that it is "difficult to find motivation" while trying to do classwork at home instead of on campus. She said that she would frequently stay at the college to complete her homework because there were fewer distractions there.

Infantino said that despite all the obstacles of working from home, she enjoys spending time with her cats. Another positive aspect of her current situation, she said, is that she has been saving money by not having to travel from home to school, though she also misses spending time in the Student Center as well as all the resources and activities the Mount offers.

New Label-Free LGBT Community Association

How one LGBT support group creates a safe space for the surrounding community



Image by Leighann Blackwood on Unsplash

By Jayden Hooper

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

The LGBT Community Support Group was created to provide support to anyone who is in the LGBT community or questioning as well as a safe place to discuss their struggles or experiences whether or not they are a student at Mount Wachusett Community College.

When asked about the importance of the group, David

Iannaconne, the faculty advisor for the Sexuality and Gender Alliance (SAGA), said, “It’s so critical that the community has a safe place to gather and discuss issues that they’re facing” and spoke of how it is a judgment-free space.

The group especially benefited students by allowing them to discover fellow students they can feel safe discussing their struggles with. Iannaconne said

that some members exchanged contact information so they could talk and meet up outside of the group. He said that there was a “relatively core group” that would regularly attend.

On average, approximately a dozen people were showing up with ages typically ranging from 17 to those in their 30s or older. Shelley Nicholson, Director of the Senator Stephen M. Brewer

Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement, who also facilitated the meetings, emphasized that members would not have to “label themselves.” Those who attended were only asked to give their first name and had the option to provide an email.

Nicholson spoke about how she loved that it was intergenerational because

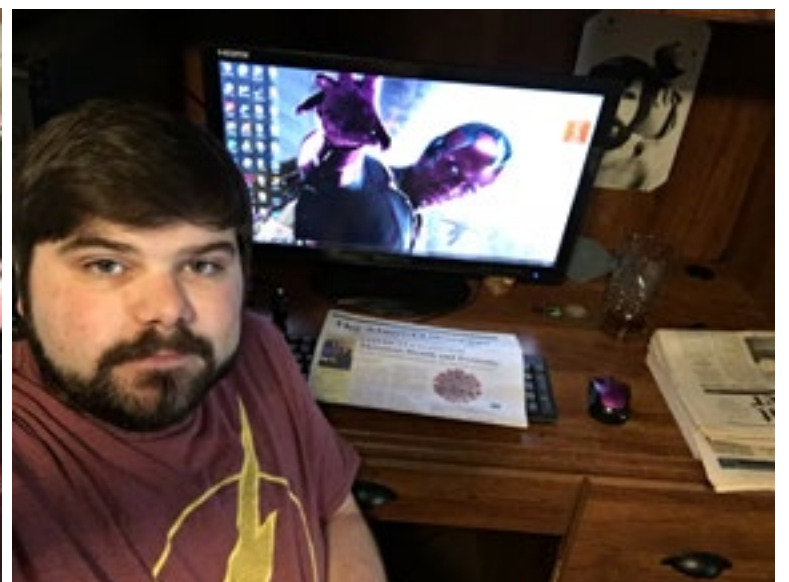
“there are definitely different perspectives, but also advice that younger people might listen to coming from an older person who has literally seen it, done it, been there, and survived.” Nicholson mentioned how an 18-year-old attended the group with their mother because there was “nowhere else for her to go.”

The group was created when several students individually spoke to Iannaconne on separate occasions to express their interest in attending an LGBT support group. Afterward, Iannaconne created the group because “there’s not much out there” in regard to LGBT groups. Before the campus was shut down due to COVID-19, the group met on the second Wednesday of every month from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in the Murphy Room located on the first floor.

When asked what he would like students here at Mount Wachusett and those living in the surrounding area to know, Iannaconne replied, “Anyone who is questioning, anyone who knows someone who is either questioning or already knows or identifies as anything in the LGBTQ community, we welcome them to come, share their experiences with other people in the community and to build this sense of support among all of us.”

The Mount Observer Staff

Working From Home



(From Left to Right) Editor in Chief Sophia Schlegelmilch, Web Editor Anna Allen, Graphic Designer Thomas Hill Jr.



By Abbi Rameau

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Photo by Anthony Haimila

Anthony Haimila is a Liberal Arts major in his second semester at the Mount. He is currently taking 5 classes and doing work from his couch. Haimila finds it is strange working off campus because he is a social person and now he can't do much socially. He is also worried about his Statistics class because they are moving to Zoom and he finds it hard to hear his instructor over the website.

As for graduation, Haimila feels disappointed for his friends graduating, and feels as time goes on the college could potentially re-evaluate and have an in person graduation, as the situation is constantly evolving.



By Claire Higginson

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Photo by George Brown

George Brown is in his last semester and is part of the graduating class of 2020. He is majoring in Interdisciplinary Studies and is taking four classes: Guitar, Computer Information Systems, Social and Political Philosophy, and Pre-Calculus.

He said that working from home is fine, as most of his work was already submitting online assignments. However, he is very disappointed in the cancellation of the graduation ceremony. He believes that the ceremony did not have to be cancelled but rather postponed because it means a lot to students and families. He also said he misses getting lunch on campus the most.



By Abbi Rameau

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Photo by Corbin Grubb

Corbin Grubb is an Engineering and Physics major in his fourth and final semester at the Mount. This semester he is taking four classes, and is doing his work from his desk at home. Overall, Grubb says he hasn't struggled too much so far and thinks that he will be okay with the online format and will be able to teach himself from the textbook.

However, he misses his friends and the chalkboard from the Honors Program center where he previously did all of his homework. Grubb is also worried that he may not be able to stay focused as much as before while he works from home. Like other students, Grubb is also disappointed about graduation being virtual, but he understands that it is necessary with the current situation.



By Abbi Rameau

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Photo by Magdalen Bresee

Magdalen Bresee is a Legal Studies major in her fourth and final semester at the Mount. She is taking 3 classes this semester, and has set up her workspace on her bed at home. Bresee says that she is currently struggling with the transition from in person lectures to online instruction, particularly in her math classes. She said that she generally needs thorough visual walkthroughs to succeed in math.

On the other hand, Bresee enjoys the freedom to do work early in the morning and have the rest of the day to herself, rather than waiting until midday for class time. She feels that she is much more productive when she is able to pace herself. Additionally, most of her classes for her major are only offered online, so she is already used to the online format for her legal studies courses.

Although she is used to the online format, Bresee misses working with her friend in the library on their assignments. She is also worried that without the structure of planned online courses, she will miss assignments as they are posted one by one. As far as graduation goes, Bresee wasn't excited to walk across the stage in front of so many people, so she is okay with virtual commencement, but did want to see her classmates one last time before going separate ways.

FEATURE

Working from Home II: Laptops and Desk Tops and Textbooks, Oh My!

To see more examples of MWCC staff and students working from home, or to submit your own photos, visit www.mountobserver.com

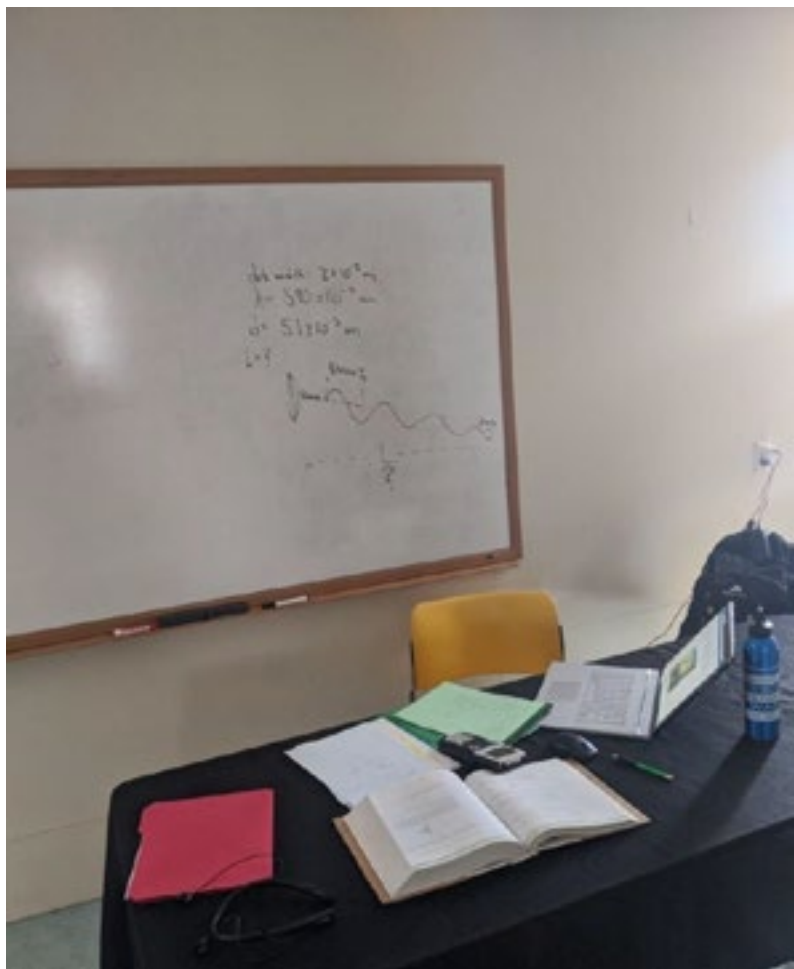


By Claire Higginson

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Photo by William Coleman

William Coleman is in his second semester of classes. He's a dual major in Film and Allied Health. He's taking four classes this semester: Government, Film Studies, Self-Promotion, and HCOP. He doesn't have a good environment at home so it's not ideal for him to be there all the time, so he's staying at his friend's house in order to get the work done. He said that his homework hasn't been hard, and the online format is easy to understand. He misses going to school though to see his other friends and attend his classes.



By Abbi Rameau

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Photo by Sam Simon

Sam Simon is an Engineering and Physics major in his fourth and final semester at the Mount. He currently takes 5 classes and does his work from a desk at home. His biggest struggle with the change to online is the loss of social interaction and community. However, Simon enjoys the self-scheduling but finds that teaching himself is taking more time than learning in the classroom. Simon misses the atmosphere and people from the Mount the most.

Simon is also worried that some professors won't grade according to the change in workload. With his tougher classes, he feels like they might grade too harshly despite the huge transition.

Graduation wise, Simon is disappointed that it's online, and almost doesn't see the point in a virtual ceremony but thinks it might be better than having nothing at all.



By Claire Higginson

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Photo by Juan Pedraza

Juan Pedraza is finishing his first year of college. He's in his second semester as a Biology major and he is taking three classes: Biology II, Chemistry II, and a Health Career Opportunity Program (HCOP) seminar. He's having to take the lab portions of these classes online as well, which proves to be difficult as he enjoys the hands-on learning aspect of labs. Instead, his teachers give him question to answer as a lab report to take the place of the required in-person lab. Pedraza has never done online classes before, so initially the change was weird for him. However, he said he has gotten accustomed to the format and is still doing very well in his classes and at home.

Beloved Professor Retires

One MWCC professor is getting his well-deserved retirement

By *Jayden Hooper*
Observer Contributor

David Iannaccone, an adjunct professor of psychology and sociology, will be retiring from teaching this May and shared how he became a teacher here, his thoughts on teaching, and his plans for after he retires.

Iannaccone said that he has “loved all of this” and stated that one of his favorite parts of being a teacher is “interacting with the students” and “seeing the lightbulb go off” when a student understands the topic.

Iannaccone said that, for

him, graduation is one of the most rewarding parts of being a teacher and “seeing students do well.” Through his many years of being a teacher, Iannaccone states that the most important lesson he has learned is “no matter what, it’s all about the students.”

Looking back on teaching students here, Iannaccone said, “I loved working with them, it’s been great fun, and it’s been exciting.” When asked about his greatest achievement he said, “I don’t achieve anything, my students do. It’s their

achievement, not mine, all I did was stand up there and talk to them.”

When asked if there was anything he wouldn’t miss, Iannaccone replied, “grading research papers and exams.”

Iannaccone has been affiliated with Mount Wachusett since 1986 and came back to teach in 2009 after retiring from his job as a career counselor with the Department of Corrections, where he spent 25 years interviewing inmates and helping them prepare for their release.

One of his English teachers

inspired him to be a professor because “everything about him resonated with me.” In addition, his mother always wanted him to be a teacher so after getting a job with the Luk Crisis Center he decided to get a Masters in Psychology.

Since teaching at Mount Wachusett he has been involved with the faculty and staff union and currently holds five positions. Iannaccone is the MWCC Chapter Vice President, Adjunct Representative, DCE MACER Chair, DCE Grievance Coordinator, and Chairing

Statewide Adjunct Committee.

Iannaccone is planning on traveling with his husband after retiring and has already planned their first retirement trip. They are taking a 12-day tour of America’s National Parks where they will visit 5 national parks. He is also planning on spending his summers gardening.

Finally, Iannaccone gave this piece advice for aspiring teachers. “Know your stuff, always put the students first, and don’t be afraid to let the students see you make mistakes.”

Engineering Happiness

Local philanthropist and engineer recounts his career



Image from MWCC and newenglandpeacepagoda.org

The New England Peace Pagoda in Leverett, MA; one of many engineering projects Jennings has worked on.

By *Dylan Quigley*
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

When Robert Jennings graduated from the engineering program from Ohio State University, he wasn’t impressed with the practical applications offered by what he just learned. He said that he was very good at what he did but didn’t find much satisfaction in the work.

Instead of becoming an engineer, Jennings went to Yale to try to become an actor.

While at Yale, Jennings had to figure out a way to pay for schooling and he found a practical usage for the engineering that he didn’t find before. Jennings became a structural engineer for building multi-purpose performing arts

centers. These centers allowed for the manipulation of sound and size via moveable ceiling panels that alter the acoustics of the room depending on the position of the panels.

Jennings realized that if he wanted to be an actor, he would have to either live in New York City or Los Angeles, and he didn’t want to live in a big

city. Right around this time he was asked by a sculptor to help build a stainless steel water fountain. When building large scale sculptures, artists need a structural engineer to make sure the sculpture won’t fall down or sink into the ground it is put on.

Jennings enjoyed doing this work very much and he stayed in Connecticut and worked as a structural engineer with artists. Claes Oldenburg asked for Jennings to work on a sculpture with him. It was the Bat Column in Chicago that Oldenburg wanted to build and with the help of Jennings and Lippincott, a fabrication shop in Connecticut that specializes in sculptures, the Bat Column was erected in 1977.

Jennings and Oldenburg worked together on multiple sculptures from about 1970-1995. Jennings said, “he was a delight to work with” and the sculptures they built together show how much Jennings cared for the work and how good he is at being a structural engineer.

While living in Connecticut, Jennings took a stand against nuclear power, which is where Connecticut got most of its energy from at the time. One rainy day, Jennings was attending an electric boat ceremony that was put together to show the negative

impacts of nuclear power; this is where he saw a group of Buddhist monks who were also attending the ceremony. Jennings wanted to talk to them but had no reason to at the time; this is when an architect approached Jennings to see if he wanted to be the structural engineer on a Peace Pagoda in Leverett at the Buddhist temple.

The Peace Pagoda was finished in 1985 and was built completely by volunteers. The Franklin County Technical School brought students from their electrical, plumbing, and carpentry shops to assist in the building of the dome. Lippincott built the spire and sent a welder to make sure everything went up well. Jennings over saw the operation and made sure that the design was possible to build. He then also worked on the Grafton Peace Pagoda in New York which was finished in 1993.

Currently Jennings spends his time at the Noonday Farm in Winchendon, where he grows thousands of pounds of food throughout the growing seasons and most of the food is donated to community programs in Winchendon and Gardner. Jennings welcomes anyone who

continued on page 9
“Robert Jennings” >>>

PROFILE

Quarantine Isn't Club-Friendly

The story of how one MWCC club didn't manage to convert to online

By Claire Higginson
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

As COVID-19 pushes students out of schools, not only do students struggle with new online work, but clubs and student life suffer as well. The Philosophy Club is but one group that has had to cancel meetings due to the virus.

Because the Philosophy Club, like most clubs, depends heavily on in-person meetings, it is difficult to continue the club

without meeting in-person. Some clubs have decided to overcome this obstacle by continuing to meet over online platforms, such as Zoom. The Philosophy Club was meeting once every few weeks to have in depth discussions about everyday topics.

In the average Philosophy Club meeting, according to faculty member and club adviser Dan Soucy, the club might talk about school and how they felt about

the work, the school system, or teaching methods, discussing whatever viewpoint they please with reasons, explanations, and respect behind their words. Other club members may then challenge views and discuss topics further in a discourse of ideas.

Soucy said, however, that he is not very technologically savvy. He is an "old-fashioned family man," and does not own a cellphone or use the computer

very often. Therefore, the club has not met since March when schools were still open.

Another reason the Philosophy Club has not stayed in contact during the COVID-19 crises is that it is not even an official club. The members unanimously decided earlier this year against having the official club status due to the amount of work needed in order to obtain that.

"Clubs have to submit a lot of paperwork to the SGA and put on

fundraising events in order to be considered an official club," said Soucy. "We don't really need the money the SGA provides to clubs because we just come together and talk."

Despite the club's unofficial status, it plans to start having meetings again in the fall, providing that the school reopens, and large gatherings are once again allowed.

Farewell, AbbyVELOZO

Graduating SGA president discusses how it runs during the pandemic



Image from MWCC
AbbyVELOZO, joined by fellow SGA officers Abraham Bravo, Sidney Meyers, and Corbin Grubb, in early 2019.

By Velhelmina Ako
Observer Contributor

AbbyVELOZO, a liberal art major graduating in May, gave insight recently into her position this past year as President of the Student Government Association (SGA), while also completing the Pathways program at MWCC.

VELOZO said taking online classes right now works well for her and SGA meetings are still held online through Zoom. She also said that her advisors from the Pathway program supported her in various ways, such as assisting her with financial aid, enrollment, and books.

VELOZO said she learned at a recent SGA meeting that over 75 students dropped/ withdrew from their classes because they could not handle online courses, or they had personal issues to deal with. One of VELLOZO's concerns is if these students will enroll next year.

As for student activities and contests, she said they are still being held online. Students are reached through email, but she said there doesn't seem to be much involvement. However, VELLOZO said she would like to see improvement in advertising clubs and organizations so that more students could join "because there's just so much to be done at the school and community."

VELOZO's most memorable success story was running the Thanksgiving Food Drive this fall at MWCC. She said, "a lot of people in the school, who contributed and volunteered, and it feels good that we can help and make an in impact in the community."

VELOZO's interest in student government began when she was attending SGA meetings with a friend and after state-level meetings there was an opening for the president's position. She believed she was a good candidate due to her attributes, such as being outspoken, gregarious, an active listener, and delegating power. Through her journey as a President, she also gained different kinds of strengths and VELLOZO said that she always kept in mind she was not representing herself only but the whole student body.

After graduation, VELLOZO will attend UMass-Amherst for legal studies with a dual minor possibly in psychology. Her goal for the next five years is to be working and still attending college. Her advice for the next SGA president is to always attend meetings, delegate your power, don't be afraid to express your ideas, set a friendly atmosphere, and keep in mind that you're here for a reason.

Robert Jennings

>>> continued from page 8

may be interested in working on the farm and learning about what it takes to run the farm and be self-sufficient.

Jennings has a green house built off the side of his home and two solar panels; these provide heat and some electricity for his home. His knowledge of growing vegetables is immense and raising chickens is also included in his vast plethora of talents. He donates the eggs of his chickens to the same community programs and Jennings has multiple different species of chickens which lay all different sized and colored eggs.



Let Your Voice be Heard!
Send your stories, poetry, artwork, photography, or other content to mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu

Tips for Staying Busy While Social Distancing

Student suggests activities to make isolation more tolerable

By **Nicholas Papini**

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Social distancing is tough, but staying busy with beneficial activities can make the entire experience a lot more bearable.

One of the best things a person can do to stay sane during this crisis is to get as much sun and exercise as you can. When the weather permits, walks around the neighborhood are great and run a minimal risk of crowding. If your neighborhood isn't suitable, try a local cemetery. Unlike a park, cemeteries are more likely to be empty of people and they're still a pleasant place to walk.

A good way to be productive on those walks is to work on your photography skills. My older brother lives in San Francisco,

and he's been spending some of his free time taking long walks and getting beautiful shots of the SF architecture and scenery.

Hiking in the woods, however, is less recommended. According to a March 31 article by *USA Today*, due to the limited number of emergency responders, accidents on out of the way hiking trails are also much more dangerous. This means that the less densely populated or more out of the way trails are also not ideal.

As an avid reader myself, I'd be remiss to not suggest that everybody crack open a good book. Or buy an eBook on a phone. It's a calm, leisurely activity that one can do when getting a nice tan outside. Just maybe don't read one of those

books about a fictional pandemic. In my experience, that doesn't help with relaxation.

Quarantining is a great time to exercise your creativity. Whether that be by drawing, painting, or even creative writing, they can be a great way to vent some frustrations. And self-isolation is nothing if not frustrating.

I may be a bit late to the party, but Spring cleaning or any kind of home improvement is a great activity to keep from feeling too cooped up. I personally tore my bedroom apart and completely reorganized it and it is an immensely satisfying experience. Marie Kondo is a wizard, I swear, and her novels and Netflix special are strangely life changing.



Photo by Matthew Papini

San Francisco architecture, as seen on a productive, calming walk during quarantine.

The Book was Better

One student's conviction that Stephen King's novels are superior to the movies



The Shining copyright Stephen King and Warner Bros.



By **Dylan Quigley**

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Everyone is familiar with the cliché that 'the book was better than the movie' and in most cases this is correct, and this applies to the works of Stephen King. For suspenseful movie

buffs *The Shining* and *The Dark Tower* are fantastic works that have worked well on the transfer over to the big screen, but they are not accurate to the original story that King wrote.

For *The Shining*, director Stanley Kubrick definitely took

creative lead for his 1980 film based on King's book. Kubrick makes some minor changes at first, such as making the overlook hotel have a big hedge maze. This is mainly different because, in King's book, there is no maze; instead the hedges are

trimmed to look like different animals and these animals have the tendency to move around and chase children.

Kubrick also chooses to kill off the hotel's cook Dan Hallorann when he comes back to save little Danny and his mother. In the book, Mr. Hallorann succeeds in getting Danny and his mother out before the hotel explodes. Yes, in Stephen King's book the hotel explodes due to faulty plumbing, which brings us to the biggest change Kubrick made -- he changed the ending of the story.

The story originally ends in a bang because Jack, who is possessed by the ghosts of the hotel, forgets to check on the pressure in the steam pipes since he is too busy trying to sacrifice his own son to the hotel. In the movie, Jack dies chasing his son Danny through the maze and the hotel still stands at the end.

The differences in King's books and the movies is disappointing. Not that I am telling Stanley Kubrick how to make a movie but why did he have to change so much? Not

only was the ending completely different but the point of view is taken from Danny the little boy and we are put into the mind of Jack instead; this is disappointing because there is more suspense and fear if you are viewing the story through a little boy's mind rather than his crazy alcoholic father.

In *The Dark Tower*, director Nikolaj Arcel takes a completely different view on this story than what Stephen King wrote. First, Stephen King's *Dark Tower* is a series of eight books that lays out a beautiful story of finding family, the becoming of a man, and pure cowboy action sequences.

One might argue about how you could make one movie that is based on eight different books and still cover all the important bases that the books cover. Well, Nikolaj Arcel definitely takes this into his hands; one thing that is a minor change is that the main character Roland is played by Idris Elba. Not that Idris is

continued on page 11
"The Book Was Better" >>>

The Book Was Better

THE MOUNT OBSERVER
VOLUME 14, ISSUE 8,
May 6, 2020

Editor in Chief:
Sophia Schlegelmilch

Assistant Editor:
Nicholas Papini

Web Editor:
Anna Allen

Staff Photographer:
Betsy Torres

Graphic Designer:
Thomas Hill Jr.

Contributors:
Claire Higginson
Peter Edwards
Marissa Shea
Velhelmina Ako
Abbi Rameau
Dylan Quigley
Jayden Hooper
Peter Edwards
Magdalen Bresee

Adviser:
Susan Goldstein

Address:
Room 344, MWCC,
444 Green St.,
Gardner, MA 01440

Telephone/E-Mail
978.630.9260
mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu

The Mount Observer reserves the right to edit and condense all submissions. *The Mount Observer* is a member of the College Media Advisers, Inc.

Printer:
Graphic Developments Inc.

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

Mount Observer Advertising Policy:

The Mount Observer will reject any ad that is libelous, obscene, violates any laws or encourages discrimination against any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, age, color, creed, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, or disability. *The Observer* reserves the right to edit or reject any ad copy at any time.

>>> continued from page 10

a bad actor; on the contrary, he is a very good actor, but it's the fact that Roland, who is the last gunslinger, is a white man. This is important in the stories for he is either cared for, ignored, or hated because of his skin color.

A bigger disappointment in the movie is that the plot is simplified. Roland is trying to kill his nemesis the Man in Black, who is a trying to destroy the Dark Tower. The Dark Tower stands at the center of the universe and if the tower falls, the universe ends. In Arcel's movie, Roland doesn't care about saving the tower; he only cares about killing the Man in Black. This is completely different to what is in the book.

In the book, Roland's only

goal is to make it to the Dark Tower and climb its stairs, and the Man in Black is just in the way of that happening. Also, in the movie, Jake, who is a young boy from New York, is plagued by visions of the Tower, Roland, and the Man in Black. Jake then finds a portal that takes him to Roland's world and he joins him on his mission to kill the Man in Black. In the books, Jake is originally sent to Roland's world by death and he is forced to join Roland on his quest to get to the Dark Tower.

By the end of the movie, The Man in Black is dead and the tower still stands, and Jake and Roland go back to Roland's world to be gunslingers. The end of the book series is much different; after the death of Jake

and two other characters who were just ignored in the movie, Roland makes it to the Tower saving it from destruction and seeing his destiny will never end.

I suggest that you don't even waste your time with *The Dark Tower* movie. If you truly want a post-apocalyptic western, then take the time to read or listen to the full *Dark Tower* series. I don't know why the movie studio or Nikolaj Arcel wouldn't want to make eight movies based on King's books instead of the movie they made that didn't even touch on the values and morals that are shown in King's series.

In the end, the books are always better than the movies and I have yet to see an example saying otherwise.

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

Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 novel coronavirus closing down all MWCC campuses to public use, we at *The Mount Observer* have decided to make the move to a fully online, web-only presence for the foreseeable future.

If you would like to keep up with us and any articles, announcements, or issues that we have planned, feel free to check out our social media platforms:


- Website:**
www.mountobserver.com
- Facebook:**
The Mount Observer
- Instagram:**
@MountObserver
- Issuu.com:**
www.issuu.com/mountobserver

Whatever the future holds, know that we plan to continue reporting "the voices of the students of Mount Wachusett Community College."

Thank you for your support!

Catch up, get ahead, and still have time to enjoy your summer!

ONLINE, ON CAMPUS, AND 5-WEEK COURSE OPTIONS




SUMMER courses

SESSION A:
May 26 – June 26

SESSION B:
July 6 – August 7

REGISTER TODAY fitchburgstate.edu/gce/reg



FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY
978-665-3182 | gce@fitchburgstate.edu



Do You Need to Hear Some Good News?

Our assistant editor reviews John Krasinski's new YouTube series



Image copyright YouTube and John Krasinski

By Nicholas Papini

ASSISTANT EDITOR

In a time where watching the news only seems to bring more anxiety, John Krasinski's "Some Good News" is a breath of fresh air.

"Some Good News" is a YouTube Channel created by Krasinski, former co-star of NBC's *The Office*, which intends to showcase some of the more positive news pieces coming out

in the world.

Krasinski signed off his first episode with "remember that no matter how tough life can get, there's always good in the world" and this is the core message of his series.

A *New York Times* article from April 14 noted that positive and uplifting pieces of news are on an upswing, with things that are uplifting gaining much more online traffic. With how

depressing and uncertain reality currently is, many people are looking towards more positive forms of entertainment and news to help stay grounded.

"Some Good News" is a fun and new take from Krasinski of what a news network with only this positive news would look like. As Krasinski said in the first episode of the show, "Alright. Enough is enough, world. Why not us? Why not now?"

Krasinski remains consistently witty and manages to stay upbeat as he jokes about our harsh reality. One of his opening lines from the first episode was, "I'm John Krasinski and, if it isn't clear yet, I have absolutely no idea what I'm doing" and this line summarizes the charm of the show so well. Krasinski exudes a peaceful and wholesome atmosphere and his charisma shines through to help viewers have a more optimistic view of the current climate.

One highlight from episode 2 includes Krasinski getting the cast of the hit Broadway musical *Hamilton* to join his video call with a young fan named Aubrey. She had wanted to see the show for her birthday, but it was cancelled due to COVID-19. The cast performed an impromptu, if obviously staged, rendition of the song "Alexander Hamilton" in a very heartwarming scene. It's over the top and way too cheesy, but that's something that the world needs right now.

One of the most common points of interest for the show

is the ongoing heroism of Healthcare workers the world over. Most episodes contain something about people who have gone above and beyond in putting themselves at risk to help others, and Krasinski seems to want to highlight that fact. The first episode includes a piece about the #HealthCareHeroes movement and all of the positivity that it has brought.

Krasinski receives many of his story ideas from fans of himself and the show, so many are from all over the world. There are also hints of his own personal preferences, with stories about *The Office's* Anniversary, baseball returning, and the Boston Red Sox. However, if he could lay off the sports talk a bit that would be great. It can become a bit much at times.

The "Some Good News" YouTube channel doesn't, as of April 29, have a set schedule, but there have been 5 episodes so far and several mini pieces that have been released fairly consistently.

A Virtual Island Vacation

Review of *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*

By Jayden Hooper

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

On March 20, 2020, Nintendo officially released *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*, a life simulation video game for the Nintendo Switch that allows the player to inhabit a deserted island where the only other residents are anamorphic animal islanders with their own unique personalities.

For over a decade the *Animal Crossing* series has been providing gamers with a wholesome creative outlet that gives them a sense of freedom that many games don't. Whether users play daily to collect everything they can and perfect their island, or only on rainy days to kill some time, this game is for everyone. The amount of time and effort put into the game will not affect the quality of their experience. For that

reason, this game has found its place in many people's game collections. There's something fundamentally appealing about being allowed to create an entire island that matches any aesthetic while building friendships with adorable animal islanders.

Unlike other video games, there is no clear ending to *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* as there is no specific goal that needs to be met. Instead, the game focuses on day-to-day life and completing short term tasks, such as catching fish and bugs or digging up fossils.

The game takes place in real time based on the internal clock of the Nintendo Switch, so every day there are new chores to be completed such as pulling weeds, planting trees, and watering flowers. Many of the tasks that can be completed in the game seem like chores;

however, *Animal Crossing* has a special charm that appeals to many gamers and the repetitive tasks are considered relaxing.

A large aspect of *Animal Crossing's* allure is allowing the player to completely customize their character, clothes, house, and island. Over time the player can collect furniture and "DIY recipes" to craft items that they can use to decorate their island and house. After playing for several days, the player is given the ability to terraform their island, which lets them change the entire layout and create rivers and cliffs. The player can build bridges as well as staircases connecting the higher parts of their island to the lower ones. Trees can be moved and planted, flowers can be planted next to each other to make hybrids with rare colors, and each islander's house can be moved. Since

complete freedom is given to players, it allows them to create their exclusive island and tailor the gaming experience to their preferences.

The graphics and attention to detail of *New Horizons* surpass those of other *Animal Crossing* games in the series. Players can interact with the animal islanders that occupy their island and will frequently see the animals going about their own lives. Each islander is given a personality and a large amount of dialogue to make each interaction feel special.

Since the game functions in real time as the year progresses, players' islands will also cycle through the seasons and will experience snow, falling leaves, rain, thunderstorms, etc. Small details such as being able to see their character's breath in the winter, trees moving in the wind,



Image copyright Nintendo

and the shadows of clouds as they move provide the player with a more immersive experience.

Animal Crossing: New Horizons was designed to be playable for a long time. As the months pass, the fish and bugs players can catch change. If a player wishes to fill their museum with one of every species, they must play monthly. Some events are only available for a short time for holidays, such as 'Bunny Day' around Easter.

With the unending amount of content and time-specific activities, *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* never becomes redundant and without an overall 'mission' to complete it can be played for as long as the player would like.