

The Mount Observer

“Voices of the students of Mount Wachusett Community College”

PREVIEWS



To Protect and Serve

On September 28th, 29th and October 1st Campus Police Officer Michael LaDeau held a meet and greet for students at the Leominster Campus.

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Scale “Mountains” with Student Life

Student Life launches “Marty’s Mountain Paths,” a series of programs that enables students to explore different cultures, have fun, grow their leadership skills, and improve their wellbeing.

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Neighborhood Observations

Students were tasked to write open letters to people of interest in their neighborhoods.

These are the results...

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Art on Campus

Photographs from the Drawing and Ceramics classes on the Gardner Campus.

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Looking for A Way Out

Struggles with Student Loan Debt May Not Last Much Longer



Photo from the White House

President Joe Biden looks into plans to relieve student debt.

By Angel Marcano

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

For too many students, the weight of student debt is a financial and emotional burden. As of September 10th 2021,

nearly \$10 billion in student loan debt has been erased. The receivers of this forgiveness are people who are permanently disabled, people who were defrauded by failed for-profit schools such as ITT Technical

Institute, and soldiers who were deployed to war zones.

President Biden, who has vocally supported student loan relief up to \$10,000, recently called upon Secretary of Education, Miguel Cardona, to determine if he could cancel student debt by executive order or through Congress. The baton has since been passed to the head of Federal Student Aid, Richard Cordray. Cordray hopes for elaboration on the matter, along with the Justice Department, and Congress, noting that “It is an issue ripe for government intervention,” according to The New York Times.

Students, especially over the past decade, have felt the implications of student loan

debt.

Tomas Aponte, a graduate from UMass Amherst, Clark University, and Tulsa Law, said that he has a combination of public and private student loans, roughly totaling a monthly payment of \$600.

Aponte, who is a Defense Attorney in Boston, said that he experienced the negative consequences of student debt upon moving to the city, “Student loans have significantly impacted my overall credit score.” Aponte claims it has impacted his ability to qualify for an apartment in the Boston area, hindering his ability to land a higher-paying

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An Icelandic Journey

Mount Wachusett Professors Invite Students to Study Abroad and Examine the Co-Existence of Man and Nature

By Daniel Dow

ASSISTANT EDITOR

A land of free-flowing active volcanic magma, of walls of sheer ice and caverns of crystal glaciers; Mount Wachusett’s Professors Michelle Valois, of the English Department, and Heather Conn, of the Science Department, have created an Icelandic studies course where students witness these events in person.

Valois and Conn stated that they are in the process of creating a two-part course they have titled: Beyond Volcanoes and Vikings: Iceland and the Challenge of Co-existence. Where students will study Viking culture, geography and reflect on the question, “Can we coexist better than we have

coexisted and what lessons does Iceland teach that we can then carry forward?”

The two spoke about the first half of the course, which will be co-taught by both professors, and will examine Iceland from its creation to its present. Throughout the class they will also examine Norse myths, sagas, folk tales, folk legends, and other influential texts.

The class will launch spring of 2022, will only be available on campus, and will be offered as an honors three credit humanities elective. Valois and Conn noted that they hoped to open the class to non-honors students if there are seats left unfilled.

The second class in the course is a six-day Icelandic study



Photo courtesy of Heather Conn

abroad, that will give students a chance to receive three credits towards a science or literature elective. The professors elaborated that on this trip students will be required to conduct a project driven by research, using influential texts

and the environment (volcanoes, glaciers, rock formations).

Once students return, they will use their research to present, either as a group or individual, on their research.

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Icelandic Journey



Photo courtesy of Heather Conn

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They hope to launch this trip in Fall of 2023 and plan to invite all students that have completed the first class on the trip.

Conn and Valois spoke about what makes Iceland so significant in answering this question. Stating that Iceland is a relatively young landmass that began to form 20 million years ago on a planet that is 4.6 billion years old. Valois elaborated that unlike Egypt and Rome the country has “no pre-history” and that “until twelve hundred years ago there was no human inhabitation.”

Valois went on to speak about their experience visiting the country, noting the “breathtaking” visuals of “icebergs”, the breaking off and melting of glaciers, and the realization that what they were witnessing was climate change. They spoke about how witnessing these events, meeting locals, and exploring the landscape changed the very premise of the class.

The two shared how the young country has undergone near total deforestation, dealt with the extinction of the auk, and the near extinction of the walrus. The two concluded that their course did not need to reflect on the premise of how man was influenced by their landscape,

Valois elaborates, “(but) how have the people impacted the landscape, (and) geology.”

Conn shared that aside from having an impact on a student’s understanding of the effects of climate change, they also hope to “plant seeds of exploration” and create “lifelong travelers.” Conn recounted the positive effects travel has had on students in her past, and that former students continue to contact her on their travels.

Valois shared that she thinks giving students an opportunity to travel enables them to have a global experience and helps them become comfortable in different cultures. She also hopes that travel will help students stand out on transfer or job applications. She added that it also allows students to build “a bond” and may “benefit their experience here at Mount Wachusett Community College.”

The professors talked about their own bonds that were built on their trip to Iceland, stating that prior to their visit to the country, they had not collaborated or worked on courses together.

Their relationship evolved as they created their proposal and presented it to Dr. Occhipinti, Dean of Liberal Arts, who

had secured grant funding for Community College professors looking to create travel abroad experiences.

Once their proposal was accepted, the two coworkers (who had never traveled together) began their journey of planning their trip and ended up sharing a living space on an island nation over 2,500 miles away.

Currently the Professors are finishing some details on the course, this includes securing funding for travel.

The cost of the study abroad is still pending. Professor Conn and Valois shared that their goal is for travel costs to be a thousand dollars per student, but are hopeful they can acquire funding to lower the cost to five hundred dollars per student.

Both professors’ goals are to keep the class affordable for students. They hope to work with the Mount Wachusett Foundation and possibly secure an endowment or grant to keep costs low.

Professor Conn and Valois plan to hold zoom sessions in the next couple months to share their experience, drive interest, discuss the class description, and answer any further questions students or staff may have.

Finding Employment After College

You Have Your Degree — What’s Next?

By Alexander Ruehlicke
SECTION EDITOR

Finding employment in one’s field can often be the first real-world challenge students face; one that’s quite consequential. You may have even found yourself wondering at times, “what do I do after college?” Don’t worry, you’re not alone. Mount Wachusett Community College offers a plethora of opportunities and resources to help their students take the next step in their career path.

College students have become increasingly familiar with the perils of finding work after graduation, and MWCC students are not exempt from this. Whether economic, societal, or just plain bad luck, the challenges faced by college students only seem to have worsened in recent years.

Don’t be fooled — your first job out of college can be very important in determining the outcome of your future career goals. While the task that lay ahead may seem daunting, it’s important for students to take initiative in preparing themselves for the workforce. You will experience the benefits of finding the right job in your preferred field for years to come.

While the benefits of finding a job are far-reaching, the same can be said for the challenges one will face finding that job. Challenges such as networking, resume building, interviewing,



Photo courtesy of Thomas Hill Jr.

and career planning will be faced by every student entering the workforce, no matter their preparedness.

One such former student is Thomas Hill Jr. who graduated from MWCC twice; with an Art degree in 2014, and a Graphic Design degree in 2016. “That’s kind of what inspired me to get my second degree at the Mount,” Hill said on the subject of job anxiety. While writing comic books with his Art degree was his passion, Hill decided to take a different approach at finding a sustainable career by enrolling in the Graphic Design program.

“I went back through and did

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“Work After School” >>>

A Way Out

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job. He noted that the debt-to-income ratio is a serious concern for many students, especially those fresh out of college. However, the issue is not merely affecting those who have already graduated.

Student Luis Ruiz of Mount Wachusett Community College has closely been following the student debt issue this year and said, “I’m waiting for them to say something--A yes. A no. I don’t know, something. They are not [Congress] very efficient when it comes to this.”

Ruiz graduated this past May, but he is apprehensive about attending another two years of college because of the

current debt does not exceed that of the national average, student debt relief in the form of loan forgiveness would make attending a four-year university more feasible. “I want to get my bachelor’s degree, but I don’t think I want any more debt,” he said.

The United States carries over 1.5 trillion dollars of student debt, with an average student debt of roughly \$32,000, according to the U.S. Federal Reserve. This is a daunting number for many prospective and current students; it is also why some never persevere to completion.

Jessica Castillo, a former Worcester State University

student said that of all the factors that forced her to drop out of college, the cost—namely, student loans—was the most significant.

“The cost of school, especially with student loans, was too much for me to handle,” Castillo said. “I was on my own. It was too overwhelming with trying to take care of myself. I had to work and pay bills, and I couldn’t just keep adding to my debt.” She continued “I would have loved to finish, but I couldn’t even think about taking on more debt.” she added, “Life is too expensive.”

Conversations regarding student debt are slowly gaining traction. President Biden acknowledged that student debt

can be “debilitating” and he is willing to cancel \$10,000 if possible. Yet, some argue that he is aiming too low; Democrats such as Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Chuck Schumer (D-NY) are pushing for a forgiveness threshold of \$50,000.

Opposition to any debt cancellation is predominantly from Republican counterparts, who criticize that such an act would be primarily benefiting those who elected to attend more prestigious and private institutions. Whatever the case may be, the current student debt crisis facing the American people today is an irrefutable fact.

Aponte believes that the cost of schools has a long-term effect

on students, their lives, and consequently, the economy. He encourages “the cancellation of some debt” and “further conversation.”

Ruiz would like to pursue studies beyond community college without extraneous financial burden. “People deserve better lives,” he said. “You can’t always do that with a bunch of debt.”

Castillo needed a break, but she was unable to get one. She works in Patient Access at the local UMass hospital. “I wish I could have finished [college],” she said. “But it’s just too expensive.”

Aponte believes that the cost of schools has a long-term effect

Have a Story to Tell?

If you’ve got the scoop on the latest community news, feel free to contact our editors about adding your voice to the *Observer* crew! To reach out, send an email to:

mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu

To Protect and Serve

Campus Police and the Services they Offer

By Dylan Quigley
EDITOR IN CHIEF

On September 28th, 29th and October 1st Campus Police Officer Michael LaDeau held a meet and greet for students at the Leominster Campus. Officer LaDeau was available for students to ask questions about campus safety, resources that campus police have to offer, or to just stop and chat with Officer LaDeau.

Campus Police Lieutenant Melissa Croteau and Senior Director of Campus and Student Services at Leominster Campus Sabine Dupoux put the meet and greet together with Officer LaDeau to answer questions students may have had, but also to show that there is a full time Campus Police presence at Leominster now. Starting with this semester with more students returning to in-person classes at the campuses. Officer LaDeau was assigned the day shift full time at Leominster,

Monday through Friday 7:30 a.m-3:30 p.m. This was possible because not all the students are returning to Gardner Campus, so Lieutenant Croteau thought it would be good to have an officer stationed at Leominster Campus.

Lieutenant Croteau said “We don’t just patrol the halls waiting for someone to commit a crime.” In fact, they have much more to offer to students. They offer crime prevention tips, usually handed out on fliers but due to COVID-19 that wouldn’t be as effective to reach everyone that is part of the MWCC community. Therefore, they also have these crime prevention tips on the MWCC website. Just go under the about tab on the top right and click on Office and Directory, on the right you will see a Campus Police link.

Campus Police also offers Alcohol and Drug awareness information as well as a few different training programs. Although these programs

have been on hold because of COVID-19, Campus Police have been working with Kathy Matson Assistant Director of Student Life to try and get these programs on InvolveMount. That way Campus Police could hold these programs over Zoom and students, faculty, and staff could join.

So, hopefully soon the programs will be available for students again. This would include Rape Aggression and Defense (RAD) program where attendees would learn self-defense techniques to prevent sexual assault. There would also be an A.L.I.C.E./Active Shooter program where attendees would learn different options to do if there is an active shooter or violent intruder on campus. Also, Lieutenant Croteau showed interest in having crime prevention, alcohol and drug awareness, and sexual assault awareness programs on InvolveMount and Zoom for



Photo courtesy of Sabine Dupoux

Leominster Campus hosted a meet-and-greet with Leominster Campus Police Officer Michael LaDeau, and talked about Campus Police interactions, connecting with students, and campus safety.

students, faculty, and staff. on the MWCC website, along with emergency service phone numbers and email addresses for Lieutenant Croteau, Campus Police Chief Karen Kolimaga, and phone numbers for the other officers that work on campus.

Work After School

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the two years of Graphic Design — and that was really helpful in boosting my confidence and my skill set,” Hill explained. But having two degrees didn’t guarantee that Hill would find work. Luckily, MWCC ended up being a useful tool in helping him start his career.

As part of his degree, Hill attended a portfolio prep class, where he learned how to prepare a portfolio, interview for a job, and sell pitches. Hill said that the course “helped me cross that barrier of ‘I’ve never interviewed for a job before’” and that “the portfolio prep class really helped me”.

After developing the connections and skill set he needed over the course of his studies, MWCC ended up being where Hill would launch his career. Hill took over as Graphic Designer of the *Mount Observer*

in 2015, and was additionally hired as a lab tech at the college, where he continues to work today.

But a portfolio prep class isn’t the only resource available to students. In fact, an entire department here at MWCC is

“I believe that students aren’t networking enough...not understanding or not being prepared for the job hunting process [can be] tough.”

– *Cira Feliz, Coordinator of Career Planning and Placement*

dedicated to helping students achieve their career goals.

Cira Feliz is the Coordinator of Career Planning and Placement at MWCC. Feliz, along with the help of her colleagues,

assists students in acquiring the fundamental skills needed to find their first job after college.

“I believe that students aren’t networking enough,” Feliz responded when asked about the challenges students face today. She then added that “not

knowing how to write a resumé, not understanding the job requirements, and not knowing which skills are transferable across job markets.

Putting an emphasis on students’ choices, Feliz said that the biggest challenges are

students, saying “we are a cohesive unit that would actually assist [students] with advising them academically, choosing their career, as well as transferring out.”

The department, divided into two groups, assists students with the *planning* aspect of their education and careers, as well as *placement* by providing students with job placement and acquiring the skills needed to be hired after graduation.

Cira Feliz can be reached at cespinosafeliz@mwcc.mass.edu, where every student at MWCC can take advantage of her department’s job boards, job shadowing opportunities, career mapping services, and much more.

understanding or not being prepared for the job hunting process [can be] tough.”

Feliz went on to explain a vast array of challenges faced by students. Challenges that include

“understanding how they fit into the company” and “most importantly, if that company is right for them.”

Feliz described her department’s role in assisting

Scale “Mountains” with Student Life

Improving the Student Community through Marty’s Mountain Paths



Part of Marty's Mountain Path - Fun & Games

Image courtesy of Kathleen Matson

Student Life Offers New “Paths” to Create Leaders and Expands Opportunities at MWCC

By **Daniel Dow**
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Student Life launches “Marty’s Mountain Paths,” a series of programs that enables students to explore different cultures, have fun, grow their leadership skills, and improve their wellbeing.

Assistant Director of Student Life, Kathleen Matson, has

created a four-part program on InvolveMount that allows students to complete different “Paths” by finishing a series of “tasks.” These “Paths” are

titled Cultural & Diversity, Fun & Games, Leadership, and Wellness & Mindfulness, and will rotate at the end of every semester.

Matson shared that she created the “Paths” with “the overall goal is for students to get involved. To help them realize that there is a lot happening outside the classroom” and that “the intent is to not just attend random events, but come to a series of events that build upon each other”

It was noted that each “Path” consists of one to two sections and that each section has a “task” or series of “tasks” that must be completed in order to complete the “Path.” These “tasks” involve watching videos, participating in activities, and competing in games.

She added that most of the events that feature videos are pre recorded and available on InvolveMount. Allowing all students an opportunity to view speakers and to participate in Marty’s Mountain Paths.

Once completing one of the four “Paths,” students will receive “MWCC Swag” and be entered to “win prizes such as an iPad, Air Pods, a 3D Doodle Pen, or self-care kit.”

The “Paths” section, located

on the right side of the InvolveMount website, allows you to enter the individual “Paths,” check the progress of your “Paths,” and complete the tasks to enter to win prizes.

Marty’s Cultural & Diversity Path explores music and comedy from different cultures, as well as offering students the opportunity to hear an immigration story from Eduardo Crepo. The section has four core required events/tasks, with a total of five that must be completed to complete the “Path.”

The Fun & Games “Path” focuses on students who are looking to “Relax a bit, enjoy the company of others, and (want to) have some fun.” It is made up of two sections, one with tasks requiring students to attend a series of events and games. The second section requires students to “Search for Marty on the MWCC website.”

To Achieve the Leadership “Path” students are required to become more directly involved with MWCC. The tasks require students to connect with the Student Government Association

and join a student organization or club. A second section of tasks, requires students to view four videos addressing leadership, and asks participants to attend a “Constitution & Citizen BINGO” event.

Completing the Wellness & Mindfulness “Path” requires students to attend four video events/tasks that focus on mental wellbeing. Some of these events/tasks include attending a weekly Qigong workshop, and to attend events/tasks that tackle issues such as mental health and substance abuse.

Matson states that the creation of this program has long been in the works, but the decision to adopt InvolveMount and the Mountain Paths program was spurred by Covid-19.

She shared that the Marty’s Mountain Paths program was inspired by The Leadership for Life Program, where students participated in a series of six workshops to complete the program. Matson added, “ I

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Profile: Tarra Kruse

The Adventures of a Single Mother Turned Student

By **Kelly Johnson**

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Those studying at MWCC come from varying backgrounds, from teens to retired, and varied ages in between. Many stories reflect that of Tarra Kruse, a mid-40s single mother who returned to school to pursue a dream when Covid -19 furloughed her job. Her Professional Writing studies compliment the love of writing she has always enjoyed. Ultimately, Kruse hopes to one day publish a series of children’s books. For now, she is enjoying the opportunity to be back in school and the time she is able to share with her family.

Her children, 17- and 12-year-old daughters and 8-year-old son, listen to her talk about the

love of writing now that she is home, studying full-time. The family mostly enjoys being outdoors and cooking together. Kruse hoped to study culinary arts after high school but did not pursue the passion when she got married. After many years raising

“I’m seeing things from a different view,” Kruse said. “I thought it was too late for me but now I have new interests and goals. I see more possibilities; I’m taking more time for myself rather than just the kids.”

Aside from writing and a family and working locally, being laid off from her job has provided access to financial aid and unemployment assistance. Now, the family studies at the kitchen table together.

a Disney cruise, where the food is being described as “incredible” by someone who loves to cook is quite the compliment. Kruse loves visiting all the different Caribbean Island ports. St. Lucia and St. Thomas are amongst her favorites as “they are peaceful,

quiet, and beautifully tropical.” Kruse would like to travel to Cuba, knowing that it’s a new territory to explore after so many years of restricted travel from the United States. Italy and Greece

are the family’s destination plans in 2023 and they are looking forward to another trip to Florida in the near future. A lifelong lover of travel, Kruse saw much of the US with her sister prior to becoming a mother. Now, she shares that love with her children who look forward to family adventures across vast oceans and remote islands.

“I thought it was too late for me but now I have new interests and goals. I see more possibilities; I’m taking more time for myself rather than just the kids.”

– *Tarra Kruse*

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Sackler/Purdue: Travesty of Justice

A Response to the Legal Failings of the Opioid Epidemic



Mann, B. (2021) NPR. <https://www.npr.org/2021/09/01/1031053251/sackler-family-immunity-purdue-pharma-oxycotin-opioid-epidemic>

Protestors hang a banner mocking the ruling of Judge Robert Drain in the Sackler/Purdue case.

By Daniel Dow
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Sackler, an American crime cartel that's name should be synonymous with those of Griselda Blanco, Pablo Escobar, or El Chapo, is poised to face minimal consequences for fueling a drug epidemic that has cost the lives of 500,000 Americans.

The Sackler family, who has owned and operated Purdue Pharma and Mundipharma, has spent the last 25 years misleading the public on the dangers of Oxycontin. Their approach

has funneled billions into their pockets, while the Sacklers misled doctors and patients on the dangerous of their products and fueled the opioid crisis.

When it comes to the Sackler family misleading the public on the dangers of Oxycontin, the crimes span decades. In 1997 Richard Sackler of Purdue Pharma, can be seen acknowledging the addictive qualities of Oxycodone in an email chain acquired by recent court proceedings. His solution was to mislead doctors by stating that Oxycontin was "less

prone to addiction potential, abuse or diversion" and to give "convincing presentations."

In 2007, former executives of Purdue Pharma pled guilty to knowingly misleading regulators, resulting in the company being forced to pay 600 million dollars in fines and other payments. According to the New York Times in addition to this fine "three executives of Purdue Pharma, including its president and its top lawyer, pleaded guilty today as individuals to misbranding, a criminal violation. They agreed

to pay a total of \$34.5 million in fines."

In 2020 Purdue Pharma pled guilty again, CNN reports the three guilty pleas are 'to one of dual-object conspiracy to defraud the United States and to violate the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, and two counts of conspiracy to violate the Federal Anti-Kickback Statute.' This finding resulted in a settlement with the Department of Justice for 8.3 billion dollars. Of this 8.3-billion-dollars, the Sackler family is only responsible for a payment of 225 million dollars.

This is the family that was on Forbes list of richest families in 2015, who transferred Purdue Pharma profits from 2008 through 2018 of 10.7 billion to their personal accounts, and the family that the house oversight committee recently revealed has assets over 11 billion dollars.

In a move to further question America's faith in the justice system; to protect themselves from criminal and financial liability, the Sacklers negotiated a deal to pay 4.3 billion dollars and forfeiting ownership of Purdue Pharma (there are currently over 400 lawsuits pending).

This negotiation was done behind closed doors before Federal Judge Robert Drain. Who's ruling went against the wishes of the Department of Justice, the Attorney generals

for nine states and the District of Columbia.

While this seems like a substantial amount of money, the payment of the 4.3 billion will be made over a nine-year period. Allowing the Sackler family to continue to use their wealth to profit and invest in further unscrupulous ventures.

I had a father who suffered from drug addiction, a father who died when I was young because of his addiction.

I have a cousin who is a recovering addict. Who used to be my best friend, who I have shared countless amazing adventures with. I no longer have this relationship with him.

I do not feel like I should have to share these stories to bring attention to this miscarriage of justice. To have to relive trauma because another wealthy family managed to take advantage of the judicial system. I feel frustrated and disappointed that the systems that are built to protect us failed, again, and again.

To this day the Sackler family continues to claim they did nothing wrong and have not released an apology. The Sackler family deserves jail time and all the profits from the sale of oxycotin stripped from them. They deserve to face the people whose lives were altered or destroyed in order to drive their corporate profits. Anything less, is a travesty of justice.

Progress Through Disagreement

The Art of Debating in 2021

By Dylan Quigley
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Have you ever been told to not talk about politics or religion with family and friends? If so, have you ever wondered why? I, too, have asked myself this question, and to my surprise people tell you this fearing that you may find out you disagree with them and start arguing. This potentially leads to someone's feelings getting hurt and relationships faltering. Well, I

personally think that disagreeing on topics like politics, religion, and tensions in the social world is natural and even necessary. Talking about these things is how we further our society. If we can't talk about uncomfortable topics with the people we are closest with, how are we supposed to talk about uncomfortable topics as a society?

Socrates, for example, is an ancient Greek philosopher. He made it a habit to discuss moral

and philosophical problems with people he met on the streets of Athens. He discussed ideas like if virtue can be taught, if it's right to pray to the gods if one doesn't know what they're praying to, and the definition of law. These are all 'uncomfortable' conversations to have, especially with the people of Athens at the time, but Socrates seemed to think that these topics needed to be discussed. Not everyone in the Socratic dialogues walks

away feeling happy and proud that they talked to Socrates, but I argue that is not the point.

A lot of the Socratic dialogues come from Plato, one of Socrates's students, so they're secondhand accounts and historians are unsure if most of them really happened. But the point that is made is that discussing uncomfortable topics of morality and philosophy eventually helps the world grow and improve. Socrates wasn't

worried about offending anyone, he just wanted people to start thinking about the world around them.

To give a more current example, have you ever watched a political debate? In most debates candidates have about one minute for their answer and thirty to forty-five seconds for responses and rebuttals. Most debates are about an hour or

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"Argument vs. Disagreement" >>>

Argument vs. Disagreement

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two hours long with multiple questions by moderators. If you've ever watched one it almost seems the politicians don't answer the questions but try to make their opponent seem worse than them. Personally, I don't consider televised political debates as 'debates', I consider them arguments that only succeed in pinning the candidates against each other. There needs to be more time for a person to get their ideas and thoughts heard, and politicians shouldn't resort to insulting the person they are debating. Insulting someone is a terrible way of debating a topic. Therefore, it seems like most of our politicians don't understand what it means to disagree but also to be civil.

If our politicians can't disagree without making it personal, should we be able to? Again, I argue that we should be able to disagree without making it personal, and if a topic is debated enough the people who disagree can even come to a

"Compromises have been the cornerstone of making the United States a better place since the start of our nation."

— Dylan Quigley

compromise. American Author Christopher Paolini once said, "A good compromise leaves everyone angry." I believe for this to be true. For example, one group of our government wants

universal healthcare for all, another group of our government thinks that universal healthcare is a terrible idea. How hard is it to sit down like civil humans and compromise on the idea?

Compromises have been the cornerstone of making the United States a better place since the start of our nation. During the Great Compromise in 1787, delegates to each state couldn't decide if the number of congressional representatives

should depend on the population of the state or if it should be a fixed number for all the states. Eventually they compromised and we now have the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Additionally, in 1964, after one of the longest filibusters in congressional history, Hubert Humphrey and Everett Dirksen were able to come to a compromise and the civil rights bill was passed. Finally, in 1977, Senator Bob Dole and Senator George McGovern were able to compromise for a revision of the Food Stamp program.

Without these compromises we wouldn't have had a Senate and House of Representatives, it would have taken longer for the Civil Rights Bill to be passed, and the countless families that

have been helped by the Food Stamp program would have had a tougher time throughout life.

Debates are essential to our democracy, and our everyday life. If someone says some outlandish stuff on social media, maybe instead of banning them or banning the words they used we could just debate their ideas with better ideas. If a disagreement becomes personal about politics don't ignore him or insult him, patiently wait to hear his side and if you disagree tell him why you do in a polite way.

Marty's Mountain Paths

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wanted to have different topics. So, I created the four different "Paths" versus the one." She added that this system allows the students to have more options and to become more involved.

She stated that she began the program this Summer and was introduced to the "Paths" through Campus Activity Team for Students (CATS).

Stephens added that she was driven to the program because

for networking. That's why I did it"

She added that completing the program has been easy "because all you have to do is go to the events." She added that joining the events from home, on her time, has made it very accessible.

Two of the events that Stephens has enjoyed the most is Jindo, a musical bingo that occurs bi-weekly, with community colleges across New England. Another event that heavily impacted her was the Ethan Fisher's Series, stating "He talked about his issues with substance abuse and mental health" and that it "was very memorable" because "I learned about trying to help people with mental issues and how to help yourself." The "Paths" will also feature a "spooky mystery" that was filmed on campus and is hosted by improv comedian Terry Withers.

Withers' virtual performance has been inspired by Dexter: New Blood, which was filmed on the Mount Wachusett Campus. The paranormal event will be released October 13 and runs 6:00pm to 7:00pm.

Liberal Arts Student, Cami Stephens, who is a distant learning student and is nearing her final semester at Mount Wachusett has been working to complete all of Marty's Mountain Paths.

"I think we are so privileged to have these guest speakers." and that the program is "Not only an educational opportunity but also (allows) more leisure with meeting people and talking to different people. Also, it's great



Image courtesy of MWCC

MWCC's mascot, Marty the Mountain Lion

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Art on



Campus

Photos courtesy of MWCC Art Department

Page 8: Drawing 1 students recent went outdoors. Students worked on landscape drawings, using ink & reed pens and their viewfinders to find strong compositions.

Page 9: Ceramics students begin with pinching clay forms and using colored slips to explore decorative surfaces, sgraffito, etc.

Neighborhood Observations

To the Family That Became Four

Man's Best Friend Becomes a Family's Best Friend

By Lauren Saunders
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

As the sun began to hide behind the trees, the three of you would always start a stroll around our neighborhood. Two laps would be completed, one mile down, every single day, just to get fresh air. The three of you are always together, a little redheaded boy who did not seem interested in the evening walks. Your son would be at a constant battle of running ahead or coming to a dead stop. You would take turns coaxing him to keep going, carrying him on your hips or bribing him with treats when you got home. Every day the same struggles occurred, but you kept pushing him to keep exercising.

Walking was good for you; everybody was stuck at home quarantining. You tried to get him a bike, but he wouldn't want to ride it himself. You tried to push him in a carriage, but he got bored after the third house. Nothing sparked interest within the boy. As much as he protested, the three of you continued to walk every single day. Never deterred from the small chance of freedom you were granted, but the boy was miserable until one day when your family of three became four, and the little boy had a smile for the first time on his face. A new addition to the family caused a spark to erupt inside the child. A furry, four-legged friend was all that he needed to find his motivation. It may have taken a long time, but you never gave up. You went through multiple solutions until you found a suitable outcome, and his name is Buster.

To the Woman Who Walks Past My House

The Contagiousness of Happiness

By Pam Day
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

You stop in front of the tree every time you walk by. You are admiring the two swings with the cute decorative frogs in them that are hanging from the branches. Although they are on opposing branches, you grab hold of both of them and pull back. First, you release the one on the right. When that one is starting to swing back, you release the one on the left. Now they are swinging in opposite directions. When one is in the front, the other is in the back. You stand back and watch. Your face lights up with the biggest smile. I am glad my swinging tree frogs bring you such joy. What you don't know is that I am watching you. My face lights up as well with the biggest smile. However, my smile is not for the frogs. Mine is for you. You remind me that such joy can come from such a simple act. Thank you for sharing your joy with me.

To the White Woman That Said "Hello"

Some Barriers Remain Unbroken...

By Isabelle Mascary
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Definitely not our first encounter. Many times, I have greeted you and your reaction towards me was that of being surprised or simply uninterested, brushing past me as if I didn't exist but oftentimes you will greet others around me. I guess it's the people who look like you who you identify with. On this sunny day, you happened to be walking your husky; Timber is his name. You stood there tall and thin but seemingly ready for war as if we were in Spartan times, holding back your husky between your thighs. I noticed you were whispering to him and there is nothing wrong with that. But, it was just your stance I was unsure about. I'm not sure if that is simply an everyday look or stance for you, but I'm sure you don't take that stance with every single person you come across, as I have witnessed your friendly and open interactions with others that don't share the same complexion as me. I approached the back door to open it and even though our eyes locked, Timber was the first one to come up and greet me. You looked as though you were caught off guard by his action. Did you expect Timber to bark at me or attack me? Perhaps by allowing Timber to sniff my hand, maybe it helped you realize that I am not a threat. "Sorry" you said. "It's okay." I replied and went inside. The following day we crossed paths once again. I didn't bother to make eye contact this time because of past interactions, but you forcefully let out "Hello!" It sounded as though it was going to make you sick to simply greet me. Thanks for trying.

Students were tasked to write open letters to people of interest in their neighborhoods.

These are the results...

To the Yellow Apartment Building, 2nd Floor

People Watching — Questions That Remain Unanswered

By Jaiene Lopez
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

I can smell you each day. Chain smoking cigarettes is your specialty. I see you on that porch — one hand always has some food while the other holds your cigarette. "Come here fatso!" you shout to the squirrels as you feed them. Occasionally, I spot you as you pull in on your pink moped carrying some Market Basket bags inside. What's for dinner?

Your husband is distracting. I like to sit by the open windows while I do homework, but every day he comes outside high-speed racing his large remote-control car. I watch as all the grass on your yard is destroyed in the process of his navigating the toy. Have you noticed how the dirt literally comes up and off the ground when he steers it at a rapid rate?

It was raining the other day. The lines of clothes you have on the roof were drenched. How do you manage to get up there, anyway?

Review: *Ashlyn* Album

American Singer and Songwriter, Ashe, Takes Leap From Norm In Debut Studio Album



Image from <https://ashmusic.co/Ashlyn> and Wikimedia

Ashlyn by Ashe

By Maddie Willigar

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Released on May 7th, 2021, Ashe's debut album *Ashlyn* is a leap from the typical pop scene into a world that captures a refreshing level of vulnerability from the '60s and '70s.

Discussing a range of topics from young love, divorce, and

from artists like Elton John, The Beatles, Carole King, and The Beach Boys into the making of her album.

Hints of John and King are seen in the piano melodies of the peaceful yet wistful track "Ryne's Song," which illustrates her grief surrounding the loss of her brother. The track creates a future where their relationship was mended and cherished instead of taken for granted.

The song begins with the soft sound of chirping birds and continues with mournful minor chords and echoed vocals to carry lines like "I got your voicemail again, seemed like you were busy/So I tried to hide all the disappointment in the message I left behind/If only I could be that ignorant girl for a couple more hours or so/ But I got a call, soon after that you died." The song continues to build, replacing the piano with a deep bass, acoustic guitar, and weeping violins to confront the reality that we are all on borrowed time.

However, in other songs, instead of looking back on time lost, Ashe shifts her focus to the bigger picture. This is seen in

Ashlyn's tenth track: "Moral of the Story." Through the song's eerie minor melody, theatrical vibrato, and conversational approach, we get an honest picture into the end of Ashe's marriage summed up with a positive spin: "Some mistakes get made/ That's alright, that's okay/In the end it's better for me/That's the moral of the story, babe."

In an episode of Ashe's short YouTube series titled *Ashlyn Episode 1: A Matter of Time*, she explains that a few other songs on the album stemmed from this same relationship. One being "Me Without You," an anthem of finding individuality and freedom after being in a relationship she described as "psychologically abusive."

The drag of her almost monotone vocals over a heavy bass mimics the feeling of being stuck. However, this is contrasted in the chorus by victorious sounding violins, very reminiscent of The Beatles. This symbolized the realization that she could break free from the abuse and be herself without this other person.

Ashe shares, "It was...a realization that I can be me without you. I can be me detached from this other person who told me that I couldn't."

A complete contrast from "Me Without You" is one of my favorites, the soft-spoken "Taylor," which captures the fragility and innocence of young love with simplistic and echoed harmonies over an acoustic guitar. The whisper-like vocals bring a level of intimacy to the melodies, and with lines like "Ooo maybe in another life/ Cause this one wasn't right/ You loved me, I loved you too soon." Ashe bottles the strong and sudden feelings of love that come in young relationships filtered through an older perspective.

From start to finish, *Ashlyn* is an unapologetically raw and diverse body of work that perfectly sums up the unique artistry that Ashe brings to the table. With her willingness to experiment melodically, and her ability to be honest lyrically, I have no doubt that this is the first of many great albums to come.



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Review: "The Musical Comedy Murders of 1940"

Actors Amuse Audience With "flawless acting," a Lavish Set, and "plot twists"

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Image courtesy of Pam Day

The cast of "The Musical Comedy Murders of 1940" take a bow.

By Pam Day

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Although Covid-19 safety protocols allotted for only 30% capacity, Mount Wachusett's Theatre at the Mount was filled with laughter from their performance of, "The Musical Comedy Murders of 1940".

The actors amused the audience as the plot and characters changed. Assisting the actors was the striking set that became a key component of the play with hidden secrets. The experience was enhanced by the sound, which kept the high energy flowing.

The actors brought out their characters' personality by accentuating subtle traits. Autumn DeSisto maintained the dignified air of wealth in

her character. David Allen Prescott was hilarious with his facial expressions and gestures.

Although it was hard to understand at times, Rachel Twiss and Rick Woods spoke effortlessly in German and Irish dialect. Andy DeSisto nailed the eccentric behavior of his character and Pam Sontag upheld the Hollywood appearance of hobnobbing that defined her character.

Amanda Lawton appropriately expressed her character as confident, while Francis Freeland was able to physically show the various emotions his character was experiencing. Matt Muller was spectacular in portraying his character as calm, cool

and in control.

Lynn Vaillancourt won over audience member Sue Marini with her humorous dramatic reactions. "I see myself as being good friends with Bernice," said Sue Marini. The set told a story of its own. The lavish selection of props gave insight to the background of the characters, creating a realistic setting. The bookcases not only held books and decor but secrets as well.

Unfortunately, the entire set was not visible from the end seats, which appeared to be unavoidable.

The sound level was set to a perfect decibel. Every actor could be heard clearly as if you were having a face-to-

face conversation with them. Sound effects were right on queue and convincing as well.

The performance was a delight. The cast kept the audience in suspense, as viewers remained guessing in an attempt to solve the "who done it?"

This play was worth seeing for the flawless acting, brilliant set design and clear sound quality.

"It was very entertaining. I enjoyed all of the different plot twists" said audience member Christine Robichaud. Their next show, "The Winter Wonderettes", will be performed in November and December.