

The Mount Observer

“Voices of the students of Mount Wachusett Community College”

PREVIEWS

NOTICE

Most of the stories that appear in this issue were written by students in the Spring semester, before quarantine. Our editors have done their best to make the pieces as relevant as possible, but a few may still be somewhat “outdated.” Things should return to the normal level of relevancy in the next edition of *The Mount Observer*. Thank you for your patience!

All Work and All Play

Ann Reynolds, Adviser to CCAMPIS (Child Care Access Means Parents in School), Academic Disability Counselor, and Parent Support Group Adviser, has recently achieved one of her goals for assisting student parents, the opening of a Family Resource Center on the Gardner campus.

For the full article, see page 2

COVID-19 vs. Your Immune System

Social distancing, wearing a mask in public, and washing your hands regularly are all absolutely rational reactions to the constantly updated science on COVID-19. Precautions can fail, though, and if they do then one has to rely on the strength of their own body to fight off this virus.

For the article, see page 3

Reviews

Chicken & Donuts, Temazcal, and *Tiger King*

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Online Clubbing with InvolveMount

New system is the online hub for student clubs and organizations



Image courtesy of MWCC

By Claire Higginson

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Covid-19 has affected many aspects of MWCC and the students who attend the college. From online classes, loss of jobs, loss of recreation time, but one aspect of the MWCC experience that has been severely affected by Covid-19 are the clubs. Clubs allow students to build relationships with people who have similar interests as them, and with Covid-19 restrictions many activities that clubs do cannot be allowed.

InvolveMount is up and running now and all students involved with clubs and organizations, or any who are interested in joining and finding a community to be a

part of are urged to register in InvolveMount. InvolveMount is there to try and keep the MWCC community strong even if it has to be online

InvolveMount can be found on the MWCC website under the Campus Life & Community tab, then click the Student Life tab and the link to InvolveMount can be found a little way down on the left side of the page.

InvolveMount lists all 43 current Clubs and Organizations on campus and offers each one to have their own page for their members to join and mingle, but it is also a place for clubs to plan meetings and activities. Each club is urged to not have any in-person meetings but to choose the most convenient

video platform (Zoom, Google, Facetime, etc.) to schedule meetings.

This new platform also shows students a lot of useful information and news. InvolveMount shows all events that clubs and organizations are having, so anyone interested can request to be a part of the event. It also has a spot for clubs to post news about the happenings of their clubs and shows the individual student a history of their memberships with the positions that they were in the club or organization and a history of their community service. These features are there to help students have an accurate resume for transfer to another school or for their

future occupation.

Otaku United is one of those clubs. In it, members often watch anime together and discuss it, read manga, and play games. In Spring, they were a small group of about ten members. The club has had its ups and downs with as many as thirty members at some points, but at other points the club has come close to ending due to difficulty gaining membership.

Otaku United holds fundraisers in order to raise money for their annual trip to the Anime Boston convention, as well as a few fundraisers for charity. In Spring, the club had many bake sales and arts and craft sales.

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“InvolveMount” >>>

Studying Abroad in Your Living Room

COVID-19 causes changes to the Study Abroad program

By Peter Edwards

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

COVID-19 has sent the study abroad field into a state of flux for some time. The Study Abroad Consultant at MWCC Tracey Betts Sarefield said that COVID-19 has changed the way that study abroad is viewed and that there are new opportunities in a similar vein online.

Many organizations are pushing for and creating new, online opportunities that evoke the same sense of global community that

studying abroad affords. One such organization is the U.S. State Department through their Virtual Student Federal Service (VSFS) program. The VSFS connects interested students to mentors from over 40 federal departments for an 8-month long internship. The sign-up process took place over the Summer but interested students can look forward to the 2021 version.

Betts Sarefield said that she feels that these new programs are more affordable

and accessible to students. For students who desire the experience of travelling the world, many of them also have the opportunity to travel abroad later on, once the world is in a more stable place.

Betts Sarefield is not pessimistic about the impact that the pandemic will have on the study abroad industry long-term. Regarding the industry, Betts Sarefield said, “Out of the ashes is something that is going to come that is better.”

Betts Sarefield said that

the program will remain on the track of slow, sustainable growth whereas study abroad programs at other universities often fail due to committing too much financially up front. Betts Sarefield said that she plans to turn it into a foundational program and something that is simpler to plan for and around.

Given that it is still a relatively new development at MWCC, the awareness of the program is going to be small. However,

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“Study Abroad Changes” >>>

InvolveMount Study Abroad Changes

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The club members always look forward to the Anime Boston trip. They get to cosplay as their favorite anime characters and walk around to different panels about Japanese culture, from traditional Japanese dress or the history of manga and anime. However, even with all the money raised, the trip to the Anime Boston convention was cancelled this year due to the COVID-19 virus. In fact, the convention itself was cancelled.

"I won't be able to go on the trip next year because I'll be graduating," said the previous President of Otaku United, Cassandra Cohen. "All of us were really looking forward to it." Cohen, as well as the other officers of Otaku United, were all set to graduate in Spring, and

therefore won't be returning for the fall semester. Going on the trip next year isn't an option.

Cohen had been president of Otaku United since 2018 when the president at the time had to leave the club. She had joined the club because her sister joined, and she was interested in anime herself. She enjoyed watching many genres, including slice of life, fantasy, and adventure. She is dual majoring in Early Childhood Education and Art and hopes to help her mom out with large in-home childcare in the future. Although her time in the club had to end abruptly, Cohen said she thoroughly enjoyed the time she spent in Otaku United, and anime will continue to be part of her life.

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introducing it to new students and finding ways to make it a realistic and affordable option will help the program thrive for years to come.

After receiving a \$349,940 grant in late October 2018 from the federal government to launch a sustainable study abroad program, MWCC has had its first successful group trip to Peru, along with multiple students taking advantage of the option to study abroad individually.

The flyers around campus state that the total cost of the trip will be approximately \$4,000. Although that may sound like not much more than the average cost of tuition for a semester here at MWCC, it only represents the cost of a two-week trip. If you planned on studying for an

entire semester overseas, the cost would be much more substantial.

Given the demographic here at MWCC, flexibility for students is very important and the program allows just that. Not only will it help you reach your goal of graduating, MWCC offers programs of varying lengths.

According to an article written by a participant of MWCC's trip to Peru in the summer of 2018, Alexandria Faneuf stated, "there are programs for all students, fitting any major and any budget. If you're in a hurry, there are even programs that last 2-4 weeks!" And not only do these trips happen during the semester but during the summer as well, opening the door to many students that would otherwise be left without an option.

Studying abroad isn't just

about being in another country and studying material you'd study in central Massachusetts, but an emphasis is put on the unique experience of being thrust into another culture and the learning experiences associated with that. MWCC's Dean for the School of Liberal Arts, Education, Humanities, and Communications Laurie Occhipinti was quoted on the MWCC website, "There is no question that we are living in an interconnected world. Culture, politics, the economy – they all transcend national boundaries. For students to have an understanding of the ways in which their lives and their communities are influenced by global trends and intercultural patterns is essential."

All Work and All Play

New Family Resource Center provides assistance for student parents



Image courtesy of MWCC

The Parent Support Group now offers resources for student parents in room 356

By **Abbi Rameau**

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Ann Reynolds, Adviser to CCAMPIS (Child Care Access Means Parents in School), Academic Disability Counselor, and Parent Support Group Adviser, has recently achieved one of her goals for assisting

student parents, the opening of a Family Resource Center on the Gardner campus.

Her initial dream for the program was a Family Resource Center in the form of a one story building next to the Garrison Center. Ideally, this building would have a study area with a

play place for the kids, donated clothes that are age appropriate, backpacks with toys and snacks, workshops, and tons of resources for student parents.

While she had to compromise on the building portion, Paul Hernandez, Vice President of Academic Affairs, and Jason Zelesky, Dean of Students, were able to find her a room on the third floor for the Family Resource Center, room 356. The Center is an area where student parents have access to childcare resources, with many of the features Reynolds desired in a newly constructed center.

The Center finished construction over Summer 2020. It is, however, unavailable, even to students who are attending classes this Fall. It is planned for the center to be filled with toys and games for the children and brochures, pamphlets, and

physical displays with relevant information for parents. It also has space for parents to study quietly and meet with fellow student parents.

CCAMPIS is a federally funded, nationwide program that helps parents to stay in school by providing childcare subsidies to parents who qualify. Currently, Reynolds estimates that around 25% of students are parents and that the CCAMPIS program will help keep a small portion of them studying at the college.

The funding from the CCAMPIS grant for eligible students will help greatly with the costs of childcare. In order to stay qualified for the grant, Reynolds asks that student parents volunteer at least one hour over the academic year and attend two parent focused workshops in addition to maintaining a certain standard of

academic excellence.

"If it's a hand up and not a handout, it will be more successful," said Reynolds. She also stated that the biggest reason student parents drop out is a lack of support. Reynolds hopes to use the Center to support as many student parents as possible, and she still dreams about a separate building for the Center someday.

Reynolds, who graduated from MWCC in 2012 from the Human Services program, earned a bachelor's degree in Human Services with studies in rehabilitation, and then a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from Assumption College. As a former student of the Mount, Reynolds said she understands the needs of the student parent community in a more intimate way than most others.

Want to see your work here?

If you are interested in joining our team, email us at mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu

COVID-19 versus Your Immune System

The reasons why strengthening your body's natural immune system is so important



Image from pixabay

A strong immune system is the body's first line of defense against COVID-19

By Dylan Quigley

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Social distancing, wearing a mask in public, and washing your hands regularly are all absolutely rational reactions to the constantly updated science on COVID-19. Precautions can fail, though, and if they do then one has to rely on the strength of their own body to fight off this virus. If we want to eventually open businesses and events back to somewhat normal capacity, then we should follow these guidelines and work on having a strong immune system.

The human body's ability to fight off COVID-19 depends on the strength of your immune system. There is a lot of debate on whether or not it is possible to "boost your immune system," or if it makes more sense to have to maintain a healthy immune system. Harvard Medical School reports that researchers don't know everything about the complexities and interconnectedness of the

body's immune response, but the majority of doctors and researchers will agree that maintaining a healthy lifestyle is the best way to insure a healthy immune response.

In an article on UT Health Austin, University of Texas at Austin Dietitian Krystle Zuniga, PhD, RD states, "You need to focus on the foundation that supports your immune system every day, and that

more vulnerable to infections and illnesses like COVID-19.

The CDC explains that a well-balanced diet includes a balance between fruits, vegetables, lean meats, beans, and nuts. This will vary person to person, but these guidelines are set to cover the bodies need for proteins, vitamins, minerals, and probiotics.

Specifically for COVID-19 defense one should ensure

against respiratory infection), and Zinc (which according to National Institute of Health or NIH, activates memory T-Cells which in turn helps the body's response to infections).

Supplementing is also a good way to ensure your immune system is strong, but you should also do your research on supplements before taking any random multi-vitamin. According to NIH too much of

deficient in before taking large doses of vitamins and minerals such as Vitamin A, Zinc, Niacin, and Folic Acid.

Good nutrition leads to your body having energy and using that energy daily will also lead to a stronger immune system. Harvard Medical School states that exercise is the single most important thing you can do to maintain a healthy body. They suggest that you get at minimum 30 minutes a day of moderate exercise 5 days a week. Moderate exercise can be defined by aerobic exercise to condition lungs and blood flow, and strength training to condition major muscle groups.

According to the NIH, the CDC, and The Harvard Medical School the reduction of stress daily is vital in a healthy lifestyle.

There are many ways to reduce stress, but it is recommended to do at least one of these exercises a day: Practice deep breathing, Meditation, Yoga, or make time in your day for hobbies or sports. Finally, one of the best things you can do for your body, something that most if not all doctors will agree on, is to have a routine and adequate sleep schedule.

As the country is trying to open normal business and community functions there is a lot of precaution and anxiety about how to keep the communities safe. The CDC is enforcing the idea of stopping the spread of COVID-19 germs. They do this by recommending wearing masks in public, socially distancing while in public, washing hands, and disinfecting heavily trafficked areas. All these are good guidelines to follow but one must also focus on making sure that their body is in its best shape to put up a fighting chance against the COVID-19 virus.

"You need to focus on the foundation that supports your immune system every day, and that foundation is made up of good nutrition, moderate exercise, stress management, and getting enough sleep."

– Krystle Zuniga, PhD, RD

foundation is made up of good nutrition, moderate exercise, stress management, and getting enough sleep." Without these daily goals your immune system weakens which will make you

they are not deficient in Vitamin C (which protects against lung inflammation), Vitamin D (which according to Journal of Pharmacology and Pharmacotherapeutics protects

certain vitamins and minerals can actually have negative impacts on human health. Before taking supplements, it might be good to go to your doctor and get blood work done to see what you are

Stressed? Overwhelmed? Feeling Down?

If current events are leaving you feeling hopeless, or you just feel you need to talk, for any reason, feel free to contact Melissa Manzi at m_manzi@mwcc.mass.edu

True Crime, Light on the Crime

Netflix's *Tiger King* was generally overrated

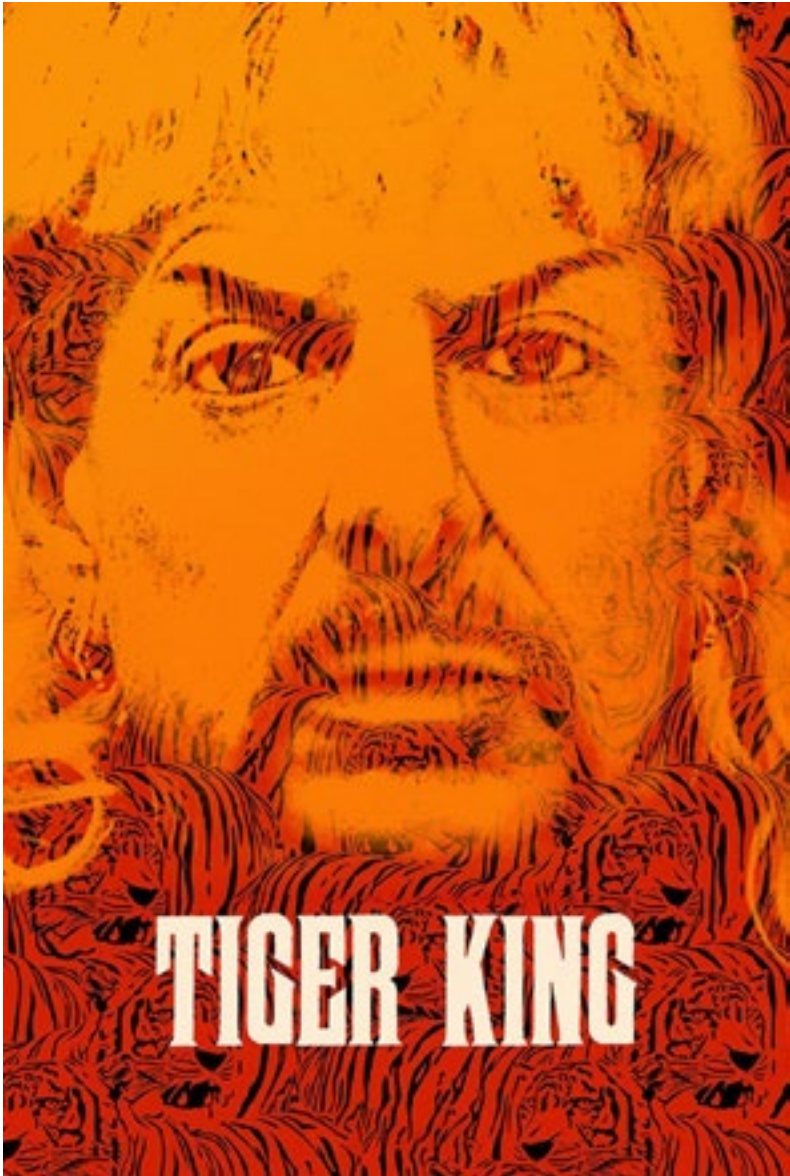


Image property of Netflix

Tiger King, Netflix's hit big cat, true crime documentary

By Nicholas Papini

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Netflix's *Tiger King* was overall a solid true crime drama, but it was certainly not worth the amount of hype that it garnered.

Tiger King showed a side of America that most people, including myself, were completely unaware existed- big cat ownership. But for all the insanity that was the reality of big cat ownership in the USA, it felt like the 'crime' aspect of the 'true crime' took a back seat for most of the show. The way that the show was formatted overall was very strange. Rather than take place chronologically, each episode jumped through time sporadically, often for dramatic value and most episodes focused

solely on one person within, or an aspect of the big cat community. It was satisfying to watch, but it did get a bit confusing at times. *Tiger King* undercut its own points regarding big cat ownership in the USA in such a way that seemed scripted to glorify its main character, Joe Exotic. I'm not talking about the obvious gray on gray morality, where even the people who preached about the poor, trapped kitties were exploiting them. It just painted Exotic in such a light that it was easy to see that some more misguided people would sympathize with him, and that's a dangerous mistake that other true crime documentaries have made- garnering sympathy rather than giving the audience the cold, hard facts.

Tiger King followed the most prominent figures in the big cat world of the USA, with *Big Cat Rescue*'s Carole Baskin and *G.W. Zoo*'s Joe Exotic. The two had a rivalry of sorts, and each of them felt that the other was obsessed with them. The footage was cut in such a manner to show that those feelings were very much mutual and to heighten the drama. For example, cutting from Exotic obsessing over Baskin's diary to Baskin's absurdly detailed website revolving around Exotic's business ventures.

The first episode of *Tiger King* seemed to set the show up to be largely focused on the two of them. But it quickly became apparent in the following episodes that the show was attempting to be a sort of exposé about how widespread and horrifying the ownership of these big cats is. It used the moment on October 19, 2011 in Zanesville, Ohio in which a zoo owner released 56 of his dangerous and exotic animals in his rural town as an example of just how terrifying this ownership can be.

Netflix released an eighth episode of *Tiger King* on April 12, 2020. The episode featured Joel McHale interviewing some of the most important players from the documentary, excluding Baskin and Exotic. The interviews were done over the internet and were heavily edited into 5-minute chunks.

The final episode did not expand on anything and only served to cheapen the series as a whole. It didn't give the events of the documentary the weight that they deserved, treating them instead like a normal reality show. It felt as if Netflix was attempting to grab as much attention and create as much conversation as they could before the world moved on to the next big thing.

Temazcal Tequila Cantina

Serving high quality Mexican cuisine locally



Image from facebook.com

Mexican restaurant Temazcal Tequila Cantina in Burlington

By Velhelmina Akosa

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Prior to the stay at home order, my sisters and I visited the Mexican restaurant Temazcal located in Burlington, MA. The restaurant is currently open for dinner every day and for lunch on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. It also has indoor and outdoor seating and takeout options.

I would recommend the restaurant because the atmosphere was friendly, and the food was high quality for a basic Mexican restaurant.

As soon as we entered the restaurant, we were brought to our table. We started with nachos, guacamole and 3 other sauces and about 5 minutes later the waitress took our orders. I went for the chicken taco, which was about \$15. My favorite combination on the plate was the rice and beans because I was familiar with the taste. Although I've had tacos in the past, this was very rich in terms of ingredients, although mine was served a bit cold.

As for the service, it was excellent at first. It was easy to find a parking spot, the bathrooms were clean but with fewer stalls, and there was a great music selection for the atmosphere. The waitress was quick with our orders and meals were delivered promptly. The check was brought on time and we did not feel rushed.

However, my biggest complaint is with the tables; they were rather small to fit 3 people comfortably. Also, with the Coronavirus scare beginning, it was unpleasant how the waitress held our cups; she held it right where the mouth goes. It was a different time, though, and the restaurant has certainly changed their policies since.

The cost of the meal for all of us came out to roughly \$85 plus tip. I've since learned that Temazcal is also well known for their margaritas so I will certainly drive there again. Not for the food but for the margaritas!

Let Your Voice be Heard!

Send your stories, poetry, artwork, photography, or other content to
mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu

REVIEWS

Sticky, Savory, and Sweet

A review of the KFC Chicken and Donuts



Image from eatable.com and KFC

The KFC Chicken and Donuts sandwich

By Peter Edwards

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Kentucky Fried Chicken, a staple in American fast food culture, released from February to March 2020 a groundbreaking culinary concoction that I was fortunate to try. The experience of the KFC Chicken and Donuts was certainly new and, at times, a challenge to enjoy but in the end, it was worth the struggle.

The Chicken and Donuts was available separately or in sandwich form. The sandwich, in my opinion, is the only way it should be eaten because if it doesn't feel like you're going to war with it, you aren't getting the full experience.

After hearing about the products release in select test markets months ago, I prayed that it would soon be available for consumption near me. I still remember the day those prayers were answered. I was sitting on my couch browsing through television channels when I saw an ad featuring none other than Colonel Sanders himself saying it would be available nationwide. I saddled up and began my

journey to the quaint KFC/Tacobell in Gardner. Giddy with anticipation as I went through the drive thru, I soon realized the moment was finally here.

The eating experience was as to be expected, a complete and utter disaster. Surprisingly two steaming hot glazed donuts aren't the most convenient thing to hold onto when trying to transfer food into your mouth. After the experience was over, I needed a few napkins, a shower, and probably a nap.

However, the taste and the satisfaction from eating the sandwich was well worth the inevitable shame and sense of guilt afterwards. Because honestly the donut was delicious and the chicken was a piece of fried chicken, so what could go wrong. The flavors in no way complemented each other but certainly didn't commit any sins.

The KFC chicken certainly wasn't perfect and came with a few noticeable flaws, most of them revolving around the two oversized, steaming hot glazed donuts sweating profusely their sugary glaze. The worst

side effect was that it turned the piece of fried chicken into a soggy mess. As a result, the quality of the sandwich degraded gradually throughout the eating process. The first bite was the best before each ensuing bite slowly unraveled the delicately put together piece of culinary architecture.

Trying to put this sandwich into words has been challenging so I'll let the quote on the KFC box do it justice: "think of this as a tiny treasure chest filled with chicken treasures." Maybe that's a little over the top but I give KFC credit for trying their best.

Even professional YouTube food reviewer "TheReportOfTheWeek" had trouble putting the proper words to it. When watching him review this sandwich, I witnessed a man stutter and struggle to grapple with what he was beholding. John, the creator of TheReportOfTheWeek, simply couldn't articulate to his audience such singularity, mumbling, "Look at that, I can't, I can't... I just don't know why I just can't get over it. I cannot get

The Status of The Mount Observer Going Forward...

Due to the continued observance of social distancing and limited contact on the MWCC campuses, *The Mount Observer* will be continuing our "online-only" policy from the end of last semester.

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](https://www.facebook.com/TheMountObserver)

Instagram:

[@MountObserver](https://www.instagram.com/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!

over it."

Although he bravely continued and promptly rated it a 6.8 out of 10, "above average" by John's standards, stating the taste was "a little weird."

Overall, feeling like I shared such a unique, collective experience was enough to make it worth it.

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