

## Putting the ‘Community’ in ‘Community College’ How MWCC’s ‘SOS’ Program Aims to Provide Students with Access to Aid in Times of Hardship

By Elysian Alder  
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Research shows that offering peer mentoring programs within schools can lead to increased retention rates, decreased stress levels among students, and an improved rate of academic success.

Peer mentoring typically refers to a paired relationship between students, with one being a volunteer mentor and the other being a student in need of assistance. While many peer mentoring programs tend to focus on academic assistance

alone, MWCC, however, takes it a necessary step further with the Students Serving Our Students program (‘SOS’ for short).

The SOS program was proposed in 2012 by Human Services student, Bryan Sanderson, who said in an article for telegram.com, “On Orientation Day, Mr. Asquino was giving a speech and then he paused and said that statistics show that half of the people in the room would not graduate.” Although he was reportedly shocked by that statistic, Sanderson soon found that the

substandard work ethic that he was seeing from his classmates supported it. Students were struggling, and it wasn’t just from a lack of wanting to do the work, either.

“A lot of our students were either homeless, or dealing with hunger issues, dealing with transportation issues, didn’t have computers or internet at home— all of these other things that were keeping them from doing their work,” said Shelley Nicholson, director of the Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement at

the Mount, “It wasn’t that they didn’t want to do the work.”

And so, the Students Serving Our Students program was born from a great need. When faced with the fact that for struggling students, the importance of prioritizing academic success pales in comparison to the importance of being able to have access to basic life necessities such as food, housing, and other essentials, as suggested by Nicholson, SOS aims to be the stepping stone to remedy that for those affected students, by “offering a hand-up, not a hand-



Image courtesy MWCC

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## Do You Have a Minute for Mental Health? “Melissa’s Mental Health Minute” Videos Still Making the Rounds, Even After COVID Lockdown

By Alondra  
DeLeon Guimaraes  
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Destressing can be quite challenging sometimes. Sometimes it’s viewed as an inconvenience, another chore to add to the to do list, or it can feel too time consuming. This perspective is often observed among the students and faculty at Mount Wachusett Community College, but it’s actually easier than one would think. The Mount’s mental health counselor, Melissa Manzi, partnered with the Dean of Students, Jason Zelesky, and the marketing department to launch a vlog series on YouTube called Melissa’s Mental Health Minute for this very reason during the pandemic. “Our challenge was to find ways to connect to our students,” Dean Zelesky explained. “Having the remote infrastructure was not easy for

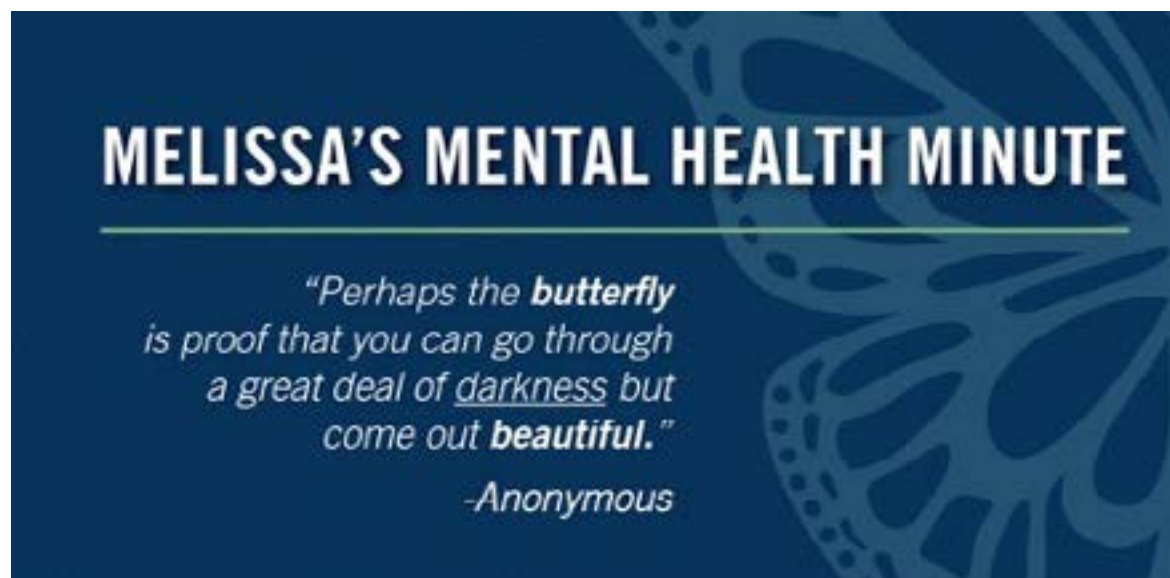


Image courtesy MWCC

our students especially during the COVID-19 shutdown.”

“The series was actually made during the COVID-19 lockdown two years ago,” Manzi explained. “The students already know these topics, so it was just something to put back into mind again.” In the videos, the counselor explores and explains topics such as anxiety, depression, time management,

sleep, and others-- all in under or a little over a minute!

These videos were uploaded to YouTube per the marketing department and sent out by Student Services once a week, which was part of Zelesky’s role in the series.

“Promoting services is critical. Also, we are working with marketing to find ways to get information and resources

out to students.” Zelesky said. The director of marketing and communications, Stephanie England, shared how they support all student services in whatever ideas they have in mind. “Our strategy is to use social media platforms as those have the highest current student following along with our digital

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# Feeding the Bookworms

## How Does MWCC Provide for its Prospering Community of Readers?

By Elysian Alder  
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Collections and Instructions Librarian, Matt Raymond, says that the Mount's LaChance Library has recently purchased "over 800 new books," adding to an already substantial inventory of "about 30,000 titles."

The selection process is a meticulous and thoughtful one. Although Mount Wachusett Community College does not currently have student life organizations dedicated solely to literature or book clubs, there's no shortage of avid readers willing to offer up suggestions or requests to the collections librarians like Raymond.

"I've been trying to make a community-focused collection, so I'm really trying to get feedback from students and faculty and gather suggestions from them," said Raymond.

"I want the collection to be informed by their habits, as well, as opposed to just me and the library staff deciding what we purchase."

LaChance Library has made great strides with exploring new genres, topics, trends, and keeping their selection as diverse as possible, while always including works that have the potential to educate, such as the prioritization of including titles relevant to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, also known as 'DEI', which are "popular among the faculty, since the school has made those topics a priority for their work," said Raymond.

Although word-of-mouth has been the primary means for the collections development librarians to discover new literary trends at the Mount, some of the suggestions do filter in from MWCC students who

frequent the popular TikTok subcommunity, BookTok.

It's exactly what it sounds like. BookTok is a trend on the video-sharing website, TikTok, where users and creators upload videos reviewing, discussing, or creating memes about the books they've read or are in the process of reading. The subcommunity has had a significant impact on the literary world—one statistic by NBC news estimates that videos posted under the hashtag #BookTok have been viewed a total of 12.6 billion views.

"We do have some students who've given me lists of books from BookTok," said Raymond. "And from them, I've learned a lot about the new trends in literature now that people are reading. It's been really helpful. I like learning it from the people that are here, as opposed to me going on TikTok and trying to



Photo by Tom Hill Jr.

The "New Books" Shelf in the LaChance Library

figure them out on my own."

While Raymond and the other library faculty might not be figuring out BookTok, they're constantly and rigorously focused on figuring out innovative ways to adjust and adapt to the needs of the community when it comes to exposure to the library

and what it has to offer. For individuals who have an easier time with visuals and don't feel that 'traditional' literature is for them, the LaChance library has a growing collection of books, such as Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, adapted into graphic novel format, for

# What Does Self-Care Mean to You

## Students and Faculty Share Their Personal Methods for Destressing

By Alondra  
DeLeon Guimaraes  
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

The end of the semester is the time more than ever to look for different strategies to succeed and finish strong which includes self-care. According to MWCC counselor Melissa Manzi, self-care is to help you get through the difficult things in life. "Does it help? I think yes!" she cheerfully emphasized. Luckily, some students and faculty were able to provide some insight on this method.

"Self-care is a time of reflection for me," said Yaneliz Montez, a health sciences major student at MWCC. "In the midst of life, one tends to forget about themselves and feel disconnected. They can eventually lose themselves," she reasoned further. When Montez is not studying or in class, she works as a bartender and is a single mom.

For self-care, she enjoys treating herself by going out shopping, getting her skin care



Image courtesy of Yaneliz Montez

Yaneliz Montez

done, relaxing, and even making sure her home is organized. "If my room is not clean, I know that I will not study well," Montez stated as she reflected on her habits. No matter what the activity is, Montez tries to fit self-care into her schedule daily. However, some days are more challenging than others. "Sometimes, I forget about it and then wonder why I feel so pressured when everything is okay, especially with school," she shared. Her suggestion for

other students about self-care? "Don't listen to anyone who gives advice on self-care because it's something different for everyone. Listen to your body and do what feels right. The rest will follow eventually."

Jenny Sauver is a student nurse at the Mount. On the topic of self-care, she shared, "Self-care is doing activities you enjoy that will make you happy and take time away from whatever stresses you." When Sauver is not studying or in class, she works as a nursing assistant at an assisted living facility. Her self-care routine includes listening to music, getting a manicure at a salon, blogging, eating at favorite restaurants, and meditation. "These things help me with my mental health and provide clarity for my mind to help me succeed," Sauver stated.

Unlike Montez, Sauver doesn't find it challenging to do self-care. However, the problem is the timing. "I normally do something for myself once or twice a month. You barely have

time when you must work and study." When asked what she would suggest to others about self-care, Sauver responded: "Prioritize your self-care especially on your day off. This will help get your mind off what is troubling you."

"Self-care to me is taking the time to nurture yourself, being kind to yourself, taking breaks, and doing things you enjoy," explained Lisa Naze, Professor of biology at the Mount. She



Image courtesy of Jenny Sauver

Jenny Sauver

continued to share, "I always say that you can't take care of other people unless you take care of yourself. I know if I practice self-care, I can give more to others."

During her classes, she shared how she had test anxiety as a student and can relate to her students with their current experiences with testing. "I see students get very stressed out and let them know that getting a break and taking a moment to breathe makes all the difference," she explained. Tutoring, acronyms, and study groups have helped her in the past.

Interestingly, the professor also had difficulty completing her ideal self-care routine because of time. However, she noticed that each time, it's different based on what her needs are at that moment. "Sometimes it's resting or relaxing, spending time with friends and/or family, or challenging myself to grow," she stated.

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# Self-Care

# MWCC Readers

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Photo courtesy of Lisa Naze

**Professor Lisa Naze**

“It’s important not to take others’ issues on as your own and have a chance to decompress”

she added as her suggestion and advice regarding self-care, “If you don’t, you can get burnt out. It’s okay to know our limits and take a break.”

When the final weeks of the semester approach, use the time wisely! Study, focus, rest, don’t skip mealtimes, and eat healthy food. Also, take advantage of the college counseling resources and free meditation apps on the college website such as Calm, Be Well at The Mount, Headspace, Smiling Mind, and many others.

Above all, prioritize self-care! It’s proven to help bring clarity, rest, and aid in becoming stress-free. There may be challenges along the way; however, any time dedicated to self-care will make a difference.

## 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](mailto:mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu)

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example. Former Assistant Dean of Library Services, Elliot Brandow, said that it’s important for “the community to see that a library is more than a quiet study hall and dusty book depository, but can be filled with vibrancy, fun, and engagement, and that use of a library is not zero sum, but graphic novels and board games and button-making can lower the intimidation barrier for research and learning consultations.”

And the Mount’s avid readers don’t have to feel confined to the LaChance library in their pursuit of new books to read, either. Carla Morrissey, Circulation Supervisor for the library, also helped organize a ‘Take a Book/Leave a Book’ program on-campus.

“When the libraries were closed during the height of the pandemic, many of us bought books. When we began to return in person, Shelley, Director of the

Brewer Center and myself were chatting about this phenomenon and wanted to provide a way for everyone to share the books they no longer need,” said Morrissey, “The idea of a free library arose and we took it from there.”

Take a Book/Leave a Book is exactly what it sounds like: a free library on-campus where students and faculty can browse the available books, take which ones they’re interested in, and, in return, deposit a book from their own personal library for someone else to enjoy. “Anyone can leave books and anyone can take books,” explained Morrissey, “It does not have to be an even exchange. The only rule is that it has to be books, not DVD’s, et cetera.”

Whether it be via the library itself or the related ‘Take a Book/Leave a Book’ program, MWCC is keenly aware of not only the avid and voracious readers within the community, but also



Photo by Tom Hill Jr.

**A “Take a Book, Leave a Book” cart found on campus**

the need to disrupt the literary industry, defy traditional library expectations and diversify in accessible, necessary, and progressive ways.

“We are here as a resource for anybody that needs help,” said Matt Raymond. “And if anybody wants any pleasure reading, they should come stop by and take a look at the new books we’ve purchased for everyone.”

# Serving Our Students

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out,” as Nicholson would say.

“For example, a student comes and they say, ‘Listen, I’m struggling academically, I’ve got a lot of stuff going on, and I can’t meet my basic needs, so how am I going to deal with school?’ And so we help them figure out: Do you need immediate housing? Do you need to be in a shelter? How can we help you line up an apartment? Do you need food? Transportation?” said Nicholson, “Research shows, and our experience shows, that with these kinds of issues that students tend to be more comfortable sharing them with their peers rather than with someone that they may see as a source of power, like a faculty member.”

In 2015-2016, Nicholson and the rest of the SOS volunteers and faculty began to notice a trend: regardless of what other issues students came to them for assistance with, many of them were food insecure and unable

to provide nutritional meals for themselves or their family on a regular basis. “And that’s where the idea for the food pantry came from, which is a part of SOS, and that was opened in 2017.” said Nicholson, “It’s been going strong; we’ve expanded to the Leominster campus and we just received a grant of over \$170,000 to allow us to hire what we’re calling a Basic Needs Support Specialist, a full-time person to coordinate the food pantry and other SOS responsibilities.”

Despite this “official” staff position in the works, Nicholson made it clear: it’s important to stress that the SOS program is, “It was a student idea, and it has always been student run and student led. And that’s not going to change.”

Sue Meagher, aide for the Center for Civic Learning & Community Engagement, reinforced the importance of the students when it comes to the service. “We’ve got an incredible group of students now, who are

involved the entire time. They’re just so welcoming and helpful, and you can just see that there’s no stigma when you walk in the door.”

As for the responsibilities of these student leaders, student interns, and student work-study students, Nicholson explained, “We ask that volunteers do at least 3 hours a week. We have two locations where we have peer mentors. We always have someone on duty in the food pantry, because obviously we want to keep that open and accessible, but sometimes we know that students have really complex issues and confidentiality might be nice for them, so we have a private office out of the Brewer Center, where we can shut the door and have a more in-depth conversation about whatever is going on.”

And the process is seamless from there, with each mentor and volunteer trained and ready to help. “Mentors have a sheet that prompts them to ask questions

about what the students need. If they don’t get food stamps, which are called SNAP... if they’re parents, and they don’t get WIC, stuff like that, we find that out right away and we can help them apply for that. The students can help them with that; by asking these questions and finding out what resources they’re already involved in, both in the community and on-campus, we know pretty quickly what they’re eligible for,” Nicholson said, outlining the first major part of being a peer mentor. Secondly, though, as it pertains to the food pantry, Nicholson said, “If their shift also entails being in the food pantry, we train everybody to be able to help people in the pantry when they walk in the door, and help them shop, but also how to restock inventory, so that they have a bit of something to do if they have downtime. We have a training manual, we have a procedural manual, even the training that we give to new

students was created by the students themselves.”

Since its inception 10 years ago, the Students Serving Our Students program has flourished beyond. Nicholson and Meagher both insisted that the SOS program is always looking for new volunteers, anybody who wants to donate to the program, whether it be food, time, or exposure for the program, and they want students as involved and present as possible.

For additional information about volunteering or receiving assistance, the SOS Office is housed in Room 152 on the MWCC Gardner campus, and may be available by appointment on the Leominster campus. Their contact number is 978-630-9255, and the food pantry can be contacted at [foodpantry@mwcc.mass.edu](mailto:foodpantry@mwcc.mass.edu) to schedule an appointment or learn more.



# Mental Health Minute

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signage embedded throughout all campuses.” England explained. “The more support we can give to our students in a holistic way, the more likely it will reach a student in need.”

“It was fun and hard to do for many reasons,” Manzi admitted when asked about the series. “One of them was that the videos had to be short and catchy so the students could help market this resource.”

Making an impact in such a short time wasn’t an easy task for the counselor. She found herself questioning, “How can I share something impactful in so little time?” Being in the middle of a lockdown, Manzi had to film the videos in the comfort of her own home. She had to shift her focus to what

was in her control. Additionally, the series faced the difficulty of coordinating communication via email and the risk of losing out on engagement as a result. “Not many students or faculty know about this resource because they receive so many emails which means it was often overlooked,” the counselor stated.

An example of this is Elys Alder, a professional writing major at The Mount who heard about the series from a fellow classmate. “I had extra time to watch these videos during my lunch break at work and was meaning to watch them sooner.” Alder explained. “They were so quick and accessible to watch on YouTube.”

The most difficult part of this entire series -- the response. “That is the hardest part. You don’t know the results. In a

clinical perspective, one would never know if the intervention helped. One just looks for any help they can get,” Manzi elaborated.

Similarly, Dean Zelesky mentioned the like/dislike, and comment feature on the social media site; when looking for feedback, not much was found on YouTube. But a different response was found outside the website. “Students may have not watched the video; however, they did access counselor Manzi’s contact information to connect which was displayed in the video and with it. She was very busy during the pandemic and still is,” the Dean recalled.

“Melissa Manzi truly cares about the messages she’s transmitting through the videos. It’s also apparent that she wants them to reach as many people

as possible,” Alder enthused. “These videos served as a supplemental reminder for the things that I already heard in my own therapy sessions previously.” They also emphasized that they would gladly recommend these videos to anyone. “Anything that promotes safe and positive mental health practices and fosters mental well-being is helpful to anyone it applies to.”

Unfortunately, the last video of Melissa’s Mental Health Minute was posted in 2020. When asked if any more videos were in the works, Manzi made an exciting announcement, stating, “The Dean of Students and I are talking about making a potential podcast in the future because many are not aware of the counseling services on campus.”

Zelesky explained further, “It will be short and include guest

speakers such as our students here at the college. We plan to touch on topics similar to what we said in the videos.” The dean also indicated that the podcast would be comparable to an autonomous sensory meridian response— more commonly known as ‘ASMR’— podcast.

While students and faculty may have to wait for that podcast, here’s a word of Melissa’s Mental Health Minute advice: “Get Sleep! It is essential!” She emphasized. “Everything else will come on its own. Also try to get a short period of uninterrupted sleep. It is better than eight hours of interrupted sleep patterns. Any small changes tend to work as well.”

## Pizza with the President

### Providing Opportunities While Strengthening the Community

By Stella Sarefield

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

On Thursday, February 2 2023, President Jim Vander Hooven was seen talking to both students and colleagues during the ‘Pizza with the President’ event in the student center.

When asked what this event is and why it is important to the college and student life, the Dean of Students, Jason Zelesky explained, “‘Pizza with the President’ is a very informal event designed for students to get an opportunity to get to know the President.” Zelesky also shared that there are other events held by the Office of Student Life where students can speak with the President, “There were a couple each semester, one casual and one formal.”

A good reason why, the Office of Student Life’s Dean Zelesky is adamant about holding ‘Pizza with the President’ is that it provides an opportunity to “get into the mind of students, in order to understand how the Mount can help students come back to school after the COVID-19 experience.”

The last ‘Pizza with the

President’ event was held near finals. Not only did this event provide students a chance to relax and step away from studying for exams, but it also provided students the opportunity to enjoy the company of other students, meet the President, and of course, have free pizza.

President Vander Hooven stated, “Social community development was just as important as the academics, meaning that a more active community will encourage students to come to school and enjoy their classes on a better level.”

A graduate from the University of Maine, President Vander Hooven uses his own experience and knowledge to get involved with student life at the Mount. He shared that his prominent goal is, “Giving any student the opportunity to reach their academic goals.”

Vander Hooven went on to explain that he has been working with the Office of the President to “create an overarching approach of equity and opportunity, with the aim of providing support resources to students of color, as

well as all students that do not have resources or presentation, through holding activities such as ‘Pizza with the President’ events.”

For example, the President even went on to describe how he is working to create a much more inclusive and equitable environment at the Mount, describing the addition of all gender bathrooms to the campuses.

The Office of the President is also making sure that all branches of the Mount are community centers for the faculty, staff, and students in Gardner, Leominster, as well as Fitchburg.

President Vander Hooven briefly mentioned that the Mount was the largest employer for the City of Gardner, and that the Mount can use this to help create their community-based environment.

Considering the COVID-19 pandemic, Vander Hooven shared, “The students are what makes the Mount. The online learning environment was a double-edged sword. It is awesome to be around this many students with no panic and



Top photo by President Jim Vander Hooven, bottom photo by Katie Fuller

without worries about masks or vaccine policies.” He went on to highlight that, “This was a sign of hope for the Mount Wachusett community.”

The next Pizza with the President event is scheduled for Wednesday, March 29 2023 at 12:30 PM in the Student Center.



# Profile: Kathy Matson

## From the Life of a Student to Director of Student Life



Photo courtesy MWCC

Kathy Matson

**Isabelle Mascary**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Kathy Matson has been a support staff member at the Mount for about eight years. She has been the director for student life for six years. Just before she began working here at the Mount, she was a student. “I’m technically a two-time graduate. I was here back in the 80’s.”

Matson earned a degree in criminal justice back in 1985 and worked in private security for about five years before she graduated. “I was a stay-at-home mom for twenty-two years.” Matson shared, “I did a lot of part time jobs here and there.”

While devoting a great deal of her time to her family and homeschooling her children, Matson started a family business that was a part of her children’s homeschool learning curriculum. “I taught my kids how to run a business, it was a history-based business.” She said, “We did a lot of our homeschooling around history. We traveled a lot around the country looking at historical sites.” The purpose was to

that I get to interact with students on a daily basis and that I can help have an impact on their college experience.” Matson explained that her purpose in her department is to, “Help students get engaged outside of the classroom, build connections on campus and enjoy the whole concept of student life on campus.” A lot of community college campuses do not have robust programming available for students when compared to a university. “Most of them will reach out to us and ask to borrow ideas,” she said.

The least liked situation about her position is the fact that she has a lot to do and there’s a lot that she wants to do but “not enough time to do it.” Matson admitted, “I’m a single person department and I don’t have a staff assistant assigned to me.”

While reflecting on pre-covid semesters, Matson acknowledged that she had a pretty good group of student volunteers but, “Covid really took a chunk out of that because we weren’t doing in person events” she added, “I had a really great group of student volunteers during covid to help with virtual events and a

go river tubing and I have had many close calls on the river and almost died twice, but I love it.” She added, “My husband and I joke that they’re going to have to build a handicap ramp so they can wheel us down to the river so we can go tubing when we can’t walk to the river.”

Matson also loves making puzzles and doing Legos. “I am a huge Disney and Star Wars fan.” Her office is dubbed the “MWCC Star Wars Museum” and she has “a whole collection of Star Wars stuff” in her office. Matson shared the reason she displays her collections within her office as being, “It helps me build relationships with students that might not normally walk into my office.” Her favorite Star Wars quote is, “I have a bad feeling about this.” Her favorite characters are Darth Vader and Chewbacca, “Just because he is cute.” Her love for Star Wars is not only displayed at work, but through her pets. “I happen to have three cats named Chewbacca, Han Solo and Princess Leia.”

With an uptick of students signing up for mental health services, Matson works closely

more departments on campus that are holding events as well. Given grant funding, Matson oversees and collaborates larger events like Fall Fest, Scaryoke, the financial literacy workshops and more.

Matson’s advice to students is, “Don’t follow the money, follow your passion.” Matson believes that students should not go into a field because they think they are going to make a ton of money out of it. “If you hate your job and you just chase the money, you’re never going to get any money. You’re going to be miserable. But if you follow your passion and you love what you do, the money is going to follow you.” Her reasoning behind this is somewhat based on personal experience. “I absolutely love my job and it’s evident to people and because of that, they’ll come to me and ask for my input.” For example, Matson explained, “If you’re an auto mechanic and you love your job, you’re going to have people coming to you because you’re good at it and people will say, ‘Hey, that guy is really good, we need to get him on our team.’ So, people will offer you more money to go work for them.”

Even if happiness isn’t money, as long as you can support yourself and your family, make sure you’re doing what you love to do. “If you love your job, you never work a day in your life because it doesn’t feel like work.” Although her job is hard and exhausting, “It doesn’t feel like work because I love what I’m doing.” she shared.

Her next advice is, “Be wise in the decisions you make. You need to do what is right for you. Just because everybody else is making one decision doesn’t mean that decision is for you.”

Last but not least, her final advice is, “Stay young at heart.” She joked, “I’m the old lady, I go to Disney, and I get on rides. They will stick me with the twenty-year-old and they’re probably thinking, ‘I got the fat lady next to me,’ but I’m having a blast.”

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**“Don’t follow the money, follow your passion.”**

**– Kathy Matson**

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lot of them graduated last year. So, I ended up with returning students, whereas one of them is my work study student. It’s been hard to build up that group of volunteers again. That’s the CATS programming group.”

Outside of family and work life, Matson’s biggest hobby is river tubing. “My husband and I have a place out in western Massachusetts, and we go river tubing.” She shared with great excitement, “We are addicted to tubing. We got our place in western mass for that purpose. That’s my happy place. When I’m stressed, I like to get out and look at the river for two hours; life is good.” She’s young at heart and loves to have fun. “I

with the college counselor. She has set up virtual workshops with guest speakers such as keynote speaker and mental health advocate, Ethan Fisher, because “there was a demand for it.”

Other services she provides to students are, overseeing all student organizations on the campus. “We have about 30 different student organizations. Everything from hiking, music, honors society, art club, student government, co-curricular programs, and events.” She added that she advises the student government on campus. “I’m a co-advisor. I also do all the co-curricular programming.” Matson also stated that there are



# I Write Sins, Not... Any More Music?

## Panic! at the Disco Announces Breakup by End of 2023

By Elysian Alder  
ASSISTANT EDITOR

After nearly 20 years in the music scene, classic emo pop-rock band Panic! At The Disco have announced the decision to call it quits. The announcement came from an Instagram post on January 24th, 2023, posted by frontman Brendon Urie. The singer-songwriter cited the reason for the disbandment as being the desire to focus on and prioritize his family, with his wife, Sarah Urie, expecting their first child.

The statement read, “The prospect of being a father and getting to watch my wife become a mother is both humbling and exciting. I look forward to this next adventure,” Urie wrote. “That said, I am going to bring

this chapter of my life to an end and put my focus and energy on my family, and with that, Panic! At The Disco will be no more.”

Panic! At The Disco was first formed by Urie and three of his childhood friends back in 2004. Their first albums were recorded while the four were still in high school, and over the course of their nearly two decade run as a band, they’ve released seven albums, with the most recent being the 2022 record, *Viva Las Vengeance*. They’ve undergone several member changes, with former band members— such as Ryan Ross, Dallan Weekes, Spencer Smith, and Jon Walker— having left the band at different times for differing reasons throughout their history. As of 2015, Brendon Urie

himself was the only remaining member of the group. The 2013 album, *Too Weird to Live, Too Rare to Die!* was the final album to feature the full band.

While many fans expressed their gratitude and appreciation for the band, some felt it was a long time coming, or, worse: long overdue. In addition to being featured on the soundtracks of films like *Frozen 2*, *Jennifer’s Body*, *Suicide Squad* and more, plus releasing countless singles such as “I Write Sins Not Tragedies”, “High Hopes”, and “Death of a Bachelor”, frontman Brendon Urie has previously also found himself in the emo music scene spotlight for numerous problematic allegations, thus consequently putting a stain on his reputation within his fanbase.



Photo by Sarah Zucca from flickr; [https://www.flickr.com/photos/live-tocreate\\_photography/11413683905/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/live-tocreate_photography/11413683905/)

Nevertheless, in a show of his own appreciation, Urie concluded his statement by saying, “Whether you’ve been here since the beginning or are just finding us, it has been a pleasure to not only share the stage with so many talented people but also share our time with you.”

Panic! At The Disco are set to conclude their European tour in 2023 prior to disbanding.

# Review: *The Menu* (2022)

## The Kitchen Gets Dark In This New Dark Comedy



Image from IMDB, copyright Searchlight Pictures

By, Gabriel Velez  
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

*The Menu* is directed by Mark Mylod, and stars Anya Taylor-Joy, Nicholas Hoult, John Leguizamo, and Ralph Fiennes.

The film is about a group of people who all pay top dollar to go to a restaurant named “Hawthorne.” After eating a surprisingly decent meal with a very pretentious explanation behind it, the day starts to become more tense as each subsequent meal seems to reveal the darkest parts of everyone, including the chef himself, portrayed by Fiennes.

Not having known much about the film, I didn’t really know what to expect. Was it horror? A thriller? A dark comedy? It falls in the latter category, as *The Menu* is a strict dark comedy with plenty of social commentary, plus some suspense and horror moments for good measure. The film relies heavily on its commentary and how the characters exemplify that.

Each person at this restaurant is pretentious and in one way or another, snobbish. Whether it be a food critic who finds something to complain about or some form of artistic intent behind everything, an actor who just likes to eat out and name drop, or three tech-bros who work for a fortune 500 company and just want to waste money and say that they experienced the restaurant, every person there has something about them that makes them unlikable. But, despite all of this, you also don’t want to see them hurt because of the situation at hand.

Without spoiling much, the film does take a very dark turn and how it reveals the intentions of Chef Julian Slowik, is the main source of its discomfort and tension. While the film itself

can be a bit predictable in how it approaches its characters and what things happen, there was always this unease about what would happen to the characters. Particularly the protagonist, Margot (played by Taylor-Joy). She is the only person in the film who is by definition, normal. She’s not a foodie. She just wants to eat a good meal. And she is the only person willing to say that she didn’t like the food, and combat the pretentiousness of the chef and everyone there. Anya Taylor-Joy does great work here as usual, and the way she and Ralph Fiennes bounce off each other and combat each other, is the center of the film and for me was the most enjoyable part.

The commentary itself was rather good. With every

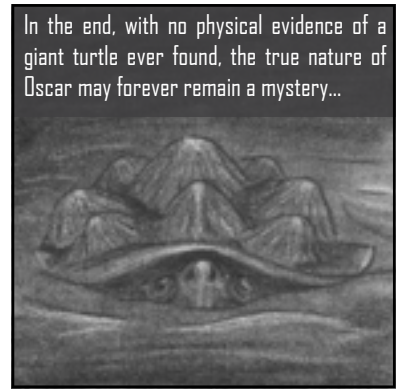
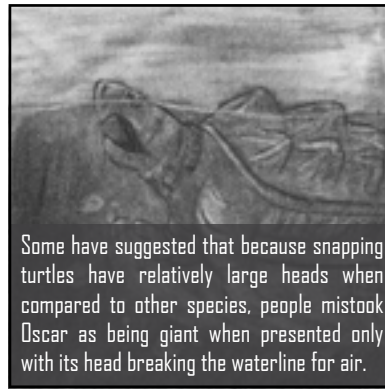
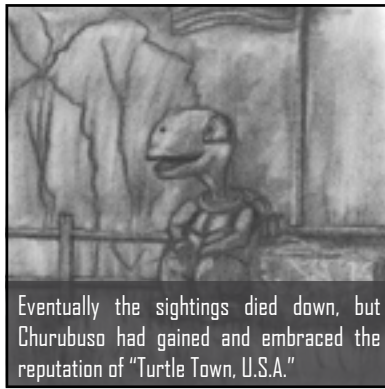
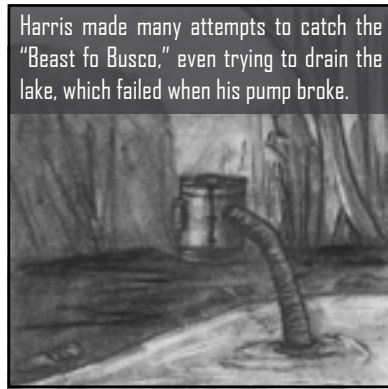
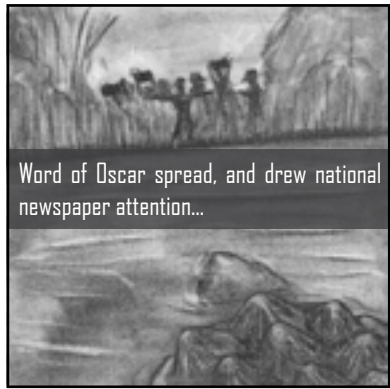
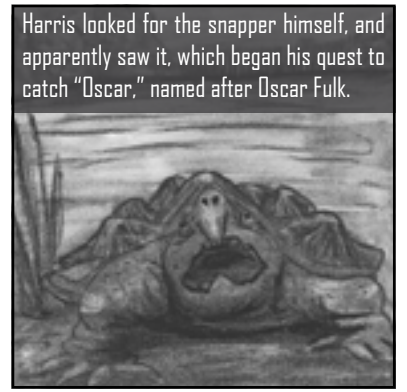
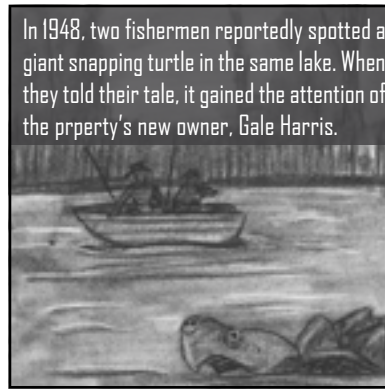
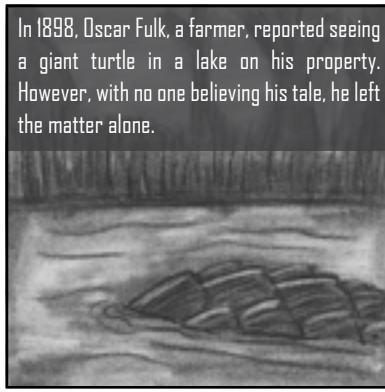
character serving that purpose, they all manage to get on the nerves in a good way and make the commentary that much more biting. The film however, does have issues, mainly with its comedy, which, more often than not, left much to be desired. The film’s creativity also isn’t quite there, and neither is it particularly surprising. There are forced moments, and one particular part of the film seemed especially forced and honestly, just didn’t need to happen. But the film was thoroughly enjoyable and definitely one of the best films of the year. The film has fantastic performances, good commentary and really good tension placed throughout. *The Menu* is an 8.5/10.

Have your own thoughts on a TV show, film, book, or video game?

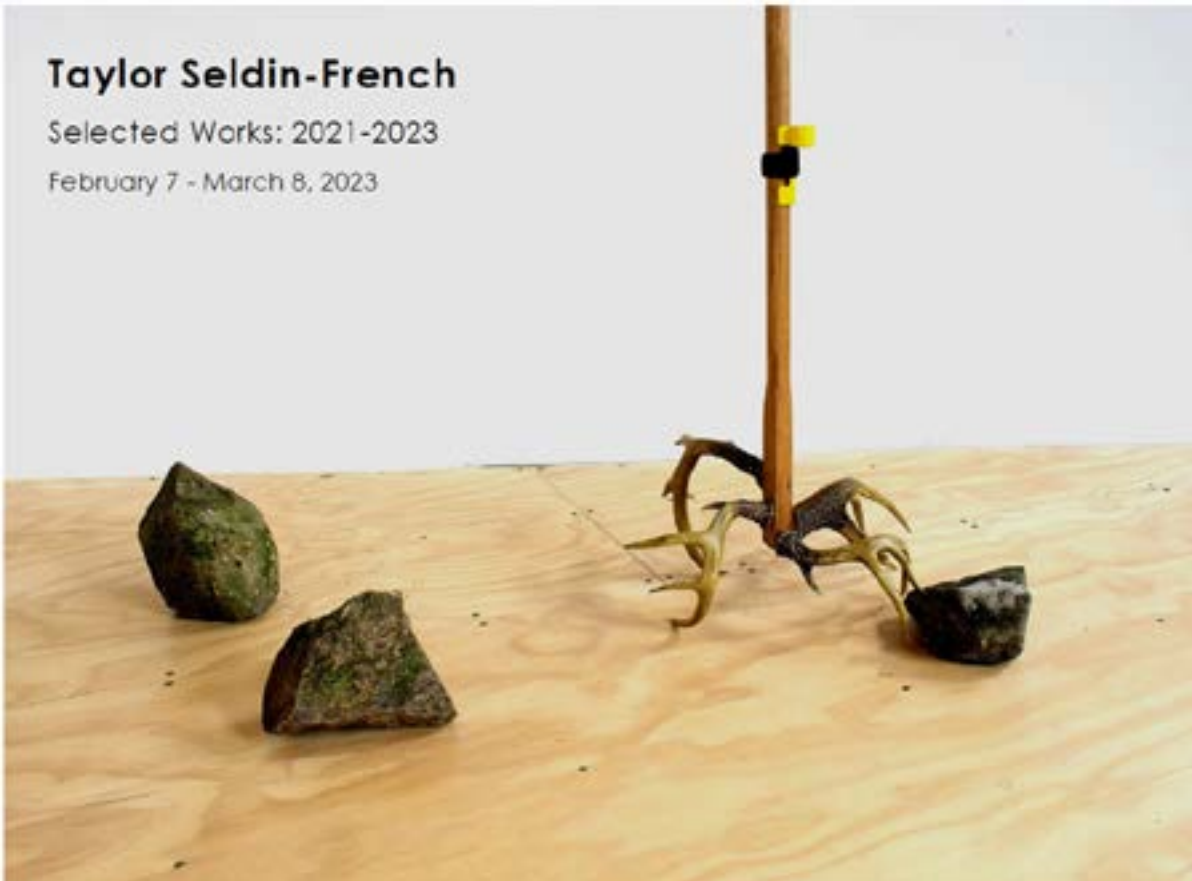
Write a review and send it to [mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu](mailto:mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu)

It may just end up in our next issue!





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Mount Wachusett Community College, Gardner, MA

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**Taylor Seldin-French**  
February 7 - March 8, 2023

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Closed February 20

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Rock, 2022, butternut, resin antlers, plumb finder, Mt. Toby understorey, 12 x 30 x 80 in.

Have your own opinions on current events, hot-button issues, or events on campus?  
Write an opinion piece and send it to [mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu](mailto:mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu)  
It may just end up in our next issue!

**WE WANT YOU!**

Looking for an extracurricular activity for next semester but not sure what to do? Join the *Mount Observer* crew and get your writing, photography, artwork, or reviews out into the world! Or maybe take on a behind-the-scenes role and help run the *Observer's* website or social media. Whatever your interests, you can find a place on our team.

**So Join Today!**

# InvolveMOUNT February Events:

**February 13: "NLS Spring 2023 Info Session."**

12:30PM–1:30PM. Zoom.

**February 13: "Breaking the Stigma: Managing Mental Health for Students of Color."**

6:00PM–7:00PM. Online.

**February 14: "Career Services On-Demand."**

10:30AM–12:30PM. Room H104 – Career Services.

**February 14: "JINDO - Musical BINGO."**

12:30PM–1:30PM. Student Center and Zoom.

**February 14: "Valentine Goodie Bags & CATS Fundraiser."**

9:00AM–2:00PM. Student Center.

**February 15: "Workforce Wednesday - Worcester Public Schools."**

10:00AM–1:00PM. Helping Hallway (Across from Student Services).

**February 16: "Eems - Musical Performance."**

12:30PM–1:30PM. Student Center.

**February 16: "Bi-Weekly Meeting."**

4:00PM–5:00PM. Online.

**February 17: "CATS Programming Group Meeting"**

12:30PM–1:30PM. Room W101 and Zoom.

**February 21: "Ran'D Shine - Magic Show."**

12:30PM–1:30PM. Student Center.

**February 21: "SGA Bi-Weekly Meeting."**

4:30PM–5:30PM. Room S105 and Zoom.

**February 21: "JINDO - Musical BINGO."**

7:00PM–8:00PM. Zoom.

**February 21: "Open Gym Day."**

5:00AM–9:00PM. Mount Fitness.

**February 22: "Workforce Wednesday - Life Care Center of Leominster."**

10:00AM–1:00PM. Across from Student Services.

**February 22: "History of the North's White Settlers and the Slave Trade."**

12:30AM–1:30PM. Room H171 – Multipurpose Room and Zoom.

**February 23: "THRIVE Coffee Conversations."**

10:00AM–11:00AM. Room H106 – THRIVE Center.

**February 24: "CATS Programming Group Meeting."**

12:30PM–1:30PM. Room W101 and Zoom.

**February 27: "Therapy Dogs on Campus."**

12:30PM–1:30PM. Student Center.

**February 28: "JINDO - Musical BINGO."**

12:30PM–1:30PM. Student Center and Zoom.

## THE MOUNT OBSERVER | VOLUME 17, ISSUE 5 | FEBRUARY 13, 2023

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