

The Mount Observer

“Voices of the students of Mount Wachusett Community College”

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CELEBRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Sue Goldstein: Driving Force for Journalism

The Mount Observer Sits Down with Its Previous Faculty Adviser

By **Isabelle Mascary**
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

In her twenty years at MWCC, Sue Goldstein successfully restarted the student newspaper and became a beloved professor and mentor to many students. In 2022, she retired from MWCC, but her legacy remains. As a woman of many hats and a great contributor to the college, Goldstein still teaches online courses. “I’m still teaching a few classes, such as college writing one and college writing two online.”

It might come as a surprise to many that this popular professor



Photo courtesy of Sue Goldstein

Sue Goldstein

didn’t even get into journalism until about 1977, and she began her teaching profession in 2003.

“They were kind of two separate things. I never envisioned myself teaching,” she explained, continuing to state that she didn’t start teaching until she was in her forties.

The Watergate scandal in 1972 was just one influential moment that inspired Goldstein to pursue journalism. It was a major political event that forced President Nixon to resign to avoid being impeached after it was learned that his administration was trying to cover up a break-in. “When I was in high school, Watergate happened. I was

very impressionable and very political, and I remember thinking, “Wow, this is something I really want to get into.” Goldstein then attended UMASS-Amherst, where she majored in journalism.

After graduating in 1977, she began working at a weekly newspaper in Fitchburg called the *Montachusett Review* for five years. She started working in other areas of communication full-time but kept working part-time in journalism for *The Gardner News*, *The Fitchburg Sentinel*, and then *The Worcester Telegram*. “I ended up working

for local newspapers, covering city council meetings or school committee meetings, and then a lot of feature stories.” Feature stories happen to be her strength. While working for *The Gardner News*, Goldstein began her weekly family life column. She continued writing the column for one year with *The Fitchburg Sentinel* and then for ten years with *Montachusett T&G*. The column focused on Massachusetts regions like Fitchburg, Leominster, and

continued on page
“Sue Goldstein” >>>

Magic at the Mount

Ran’D Shine Brings Wonder, and Laughs, to Gardner Campus

By **Luke Guertin**
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

On February 21, Magician and Comedian Ran’D Shine put on a magic show for students, their children, and all others interested in the Student Life Center at the MWCC Gardner campus.

“The purpose of the show is to allow students to relax, to take a break from academics,” said Kathy Matson, the head of Student Life. “There’s a reason this event was planned over February vacation.”

Kathy first met Ran’D Shine at the annual meeting of the Association for the Promotion of Campus Activities (APCA) back in 2020. According to Ran’D, it took very little convincing to come out and perform at the Gardner campus.

With the little kids in the front, Ran’D Shine came onto the stage and wowed the audience, young and old. Some of the solo

tricks included pulling knots off a rope (which he did with an older volunteer later), making balloon animals inside of a paper bag, hypnotizing students by waving, changing a black rabbit into a white rabbit inside of a closed book, and of course performing card tricks with his “ancient, mysterious, and ritualistic” cards. Shine even captivated the audience with a story and proceeded to show the group the trick presented in the story. Tricks with an invisible deck of cards, tissue paper, and the rope involved volunteers of all ages from the audience.

Although Ran’D Shine normally performs in front of older audiences, he was smiling and having fun with the younger kids, who were wowing and screaming with excitement right up front. When asked if he works in magic for the reactions, he said, “It’s [magic]



Photo courtesy of MWCC and Ran’D Shine

Magician/comedian Ran’D Shine

for everyone. It’s more than vacations; it’s for joy and to get away from academic stress.”

“It’s fun to be a part of anything, really,” said Alax, a member of the audience and a participant in one of Ran’D’s tricks, who couldn’t look away during the entire trick.

“I didn’t get to go the last time he came here, so I was glad I got to come,” said Aimee, another member of the audience. Both Alax

and Aimee agreed that this event, along with other events planned by Student Life, are fun and relaxing.

While there are no definitive plans for Ran’D to come back this semester, there are still plenty of events coming up for students to relax and have fun, including Musical Bingo (starting March 14), Therapy Dogs (March 27), and Tropical Sands DJ Dance Party (March 30).

PREVIEWS

The Observer Celebrates Women’s History Month
Check out profiles on three MWCC professors and one student.
see pages 4 - 6

Community Collaboration and SAC
Exploring the Shared Support Between MWCC and Leominster’s Spanish American Center
For the full article, see page 2

Review: Man of La Mancha
“The Impossible Dream” Comes to the Mount
For the full article, see page 8

Creative Writing: see page 7

Comics: see page 8

Events: see page 9

Community Collaboration and SAC

Exploring the Shared Support Between MWCC and Leominster's Spanish American Center

By Gabriel Velez

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

The Spanish American Center, located in Leominster, Massachusetts, is run by Neddy Latimer and provides a variety of services to all sorts of people in the state, such as domestic abuse programs, ESL classes, elder services, summer programs, food pantries, and others. They have a focus on bilingual services and help those with language barriers, particularly Spanish, Brazilian, and Portuguese speaking individuals, although they do recommend an interpreter join the person needing it. They are a non-profit organization that started in 1966 by members of the Catholic clergy who wanted to respond to the needs of the Spanish

community. The center started as an outreach, information, and referral network. The center as we know it today wasn't officially established until 1972. According to their website, "The Center is the only agency in Leominster specifically oriented towards the Spanish-speaking community, estimated at over 15,000. Today the Center offers multiple programs, has revenues in excess of \$500,000, and is SOMWBA (State Office of Minority and Women Business Assistance) certified."

The domestic abuse program gives case management to the victims and children of those who have suffered from domestic abuse. The program also provides shelter, housing services, translation, counseling, and legal support. They have youth services held after school that provide basic support and prevention classes for substance/alcohol abuse, bullying prevention, and tutoring. The



Photo from spanishamericancenter.org

The Spanish American Center in Leominster, MA

elder services provide help for those over 60 years of age (and AARP members) and provide the same services as the information, referral, and advocacy programs. Mickey Guzman, the Information, Referral and

"SAC has participated in several community endeavors with The Mount. We have served on some joint community action committees and boards, participated in joint educational collaborations, and served as translators during some Mount events."

– Mickey Guzman

Advocacy Specialist at the center, stated, "It is extremely important that our services and programs are provided. They are why SAC was established in 1966 as a non-profit organization. These services and programs are instilled in our vision for every person to live in a safe, healthy, peaceful, and prosperous community; in our mission to respond to the social, health, educational, and cultural

needs of the community, with a special focus on the "Hispanic/Latino community, which is limited by language, poverty, and cultural barriers; and in our action statement, which is in keeping with our Hispanic/

Latino traditions and mindful of the historical principles of American democracy. SAC adheres to the values of inclusion and acceptance while embracing one another in collaboration, celebration, and hope."

Guzman's job is to inform people about the center and what they do, as well as about services that provide help in all sorts of areas, such as employment, housing, social security, and

other complicated living needs. As stated earlier, the SAC has a fully operational kitchen. Guzman elaborated further, "SAC's kitchen is unique. We provide daily meals for the homeless in the Leominster

shelter, provide meals to several community neighborhoods, provided (and hopefully will provide again) community meals to anyone who came to SAC regardless of income, three times a week prior to COVID-19, and still cater when asked. There is a kitchen supervisor, four cooks, and several volunteers who prepare and package all the meals. Hot and cold meals are prepared." They also have

a community meal program. In Guzman's words, "SAC is providing community meals to the "homeless" at the shelter and in several neighborhoods. SAC has a food truck that is equipped with hot and cold compartments. Meals are cooked every day. SAC also receives and gives out breads, cakes, pastries, and other food items on a weekly basis."

The center is also sponsored by The Mount itself! When Guzman was asked about the history between MWCC and the SAC, he said, "SAC has participated in several community endeavors with The Mount. We have served on some joint community action committees and boards, participated in joint educational collaborations, and served as translators during some Mount events. The Mount has also provided funds to SAC in support of the Summer Up and Gear Up programs and Hispanic/Latino Heritage events."

With all the services provided there, it is clear why the Mount supports and sponsors this center. The magnificent work they do with their kitchen and all the volunteers and workers create a place that people need. Guzman is proud of the work they do there, concluding with, "On behalf of the director, Neddy Latimer, and our Board of Directors, I can tell you that we are very proud of our accomplishments throughout the years. We are a small agency compared to many others, but we do more and are more effective than many other bigger/larger agencies. I feel our clients keep coming to us and/or keep referring people to come to us for services/support/assistance because they trust us to help them as best we can."

Sue Goldstein

>>>continued from page 1

Gardner. "I just wrote about my family, and that's really all it was, but it was great fun, and it was tremendous discipline because I always had to meet a deadline, like every week," she explained, chuckling. "I wrote a lot of feature stories, and eventually I ended up with my own column for ten years. It was called "That's Life."

When *The Worcester Telegram* went out of business, Goldstein went back to school and obtained another master's degree in English from Fitchburg State University. After graduating from FSU, Goldstein started teaching English part-time at the Mount. "I really liked teaching English, so when there was an opening, I applied in 2003, and I was just really lucky that I was able to get in." Two years after joining the Mount Community, Goldstein started the Mount Observer from the ground up. "I started the [school] paper from scratch," she said. "There was no pattern to follow."

Then, in 2007, Goldstein and the student newspaper found themselves faced with an obstacle that had an interesting turn of events that led the managing editor at the time to be nationally recognized for her due diligence in 2008.

During the night of graduation in 2007, many issues of their May 2007 paper mysteriously went missing. "The incoming editor decided to start her position as editor early and asked the campus police to look at the cameras," she shared. "The campus police looked at the cameras and gave her a report and it showed the then president, Asquino did not want that scathing front-page editorial to be visible on campus," she said.

The students at that time tried to interview President



Photo courtesy of Sue Goldstein

Goldstein standing on glaciers in Iceland

Daniel Asquino right after the shootings on the Virginia Tech college campus. He was away at a conference and asked them to contact someone else at the college but a day later, he gave a long interview to the local newspaper, *The Gardner News*. Goldstein explained, "Students were upset, and they felt that the president had dismissed them as journalists, so they wrote a scathing editorial and printed it on the front page."

"I think what bothered President Asquino was that when the issue came out in May 2007, Gov. Patrick Duval was coming to campus to give the commencement address to graduates, and I think President Asquino did not want that scathing front-page editorial to be visible on campus," she said.

When student coverage of the president's action received national recognition from

supporter of the student press too!" she added.

Sharing her views on the importance of the student newspaper, Goldstein believes that publishing a student newspaper is critical for keeping democracy healthy on our college campus; if not, how else can students get their viewpoints across? She went on to say, "All colleges have a public relations department, but public relations departments have one main goal: to make the college look good by highlighting success stories," adding, "The public relations department is not going to highlight problems at the college because that's not their job. But the student newspaper can investigate all areas of campus, those areas that are working well for students and those that are not."

Due to the fact that Goldstein had been a news reporter many years ago, she used her skills to gather pertinent information from other individuals that she knew who had retired. "What I realized is that there were four areas in life that you need to

"The public relations department is not going to highlight problems at the college because that's not their job. But the student newspaper can investigate all areas of campus, those areas that are working well for students and those that are not."

– Sue Goldstein

understanding of free speech on campus and why newspapers on campus should not be thrown away. President Asquino supported the paper one hundred percent from that day forward and also gave the editor-in-chief at the time an award at the end of the year. She was the division winner of the 2008 Payne Awards for Ethics in Journalism. "We have been fortunate because Dr. Vander Hooven is also a great

concentrate on when you retire." Those four areas are the ones that are guiding her now. One of the areas a person needs to concentrate on during retirement is physical health. "Every day, I exercise."

The second area is mental health. "I'm keeping my mind occupied and learning new things," she said. Goldstein shared that she not only teaches classes but also takes classes

and is a part of a couple of book clubs.

The next area of concentration is social interaction. "This is when you hang out with family and friends." She continued, "Now that my children are older, they like me now. They're adults, so we all hang out." she laughed. The last area to concentrate on during retirement is the community and giving back to it. Goldstein shared that she volunteers every week at a local cat shelter. "It's about ten hours a week, and then I volunteer at the library."

Although she used to write a lot, she's working on incorporating that passion into how she structures her time. Reflecting on the many joys of retirement, she said, "One thing I'm loving about my retirement is that I can do more volunteering. There's such a need, and there are so many animals."

Two of her biggest passions are animal rescue and reading. Her love for animals began in her childhood. She was born and raised in Worcester and grew up in her father's home. A cat lover,

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Write an opinion piece and send it to mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu

It may just end up in our next issue!

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

WOMEN OF THE MOUNT

PROFILES HONORING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH



Ann Reynolds

By Isabelle Mascary
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Ann Reynolds is the Academic Disability Counselor and Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) advisor at the Mount. She works primarily with student-parents and students with disabilities. She also

oversees the child watch program on campus. Prior to moving to the United States thirty years ago and joining the Mount Community, Reynolds lived in England.

Before college, Reynolds was a stay-at-home mom. "I was a substitute teacher in a very past life, pre-children. I used to decorate windows in England as well."

She actually started part-time at the Mount. "I came to school here at the Mount in 2009. I graduated in 2012, but I was working as a tutor in the tutor center," she explained. Her major at that time was human services. "I stayed working as a tutor, and I transferred to Assumption and went into their bachelor's program as a Human Services and Rehabilitation study."

After she obtained her bachelor's degree, she was informed about the CCAMPIS position by Karen Costa. "She told me that I should go for the CCAMPIS position, but I told her, 'I don't know anything about early childhood, even though I have four children.'" Despite her doubts, she applied and got the job. >>> "I realized fairly quickly that my position was more in support of the student-parent, and then I connected with people on a national level because of going to the conferences and realizing how huge this was. It was wonderful that there was so much out there," she shared.



Michelle Valois

By Isabelle Mascary
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Before becoming a Professor at the Mount, Michelle Valois served as an adjunct professor for the past twenty-three years. Two years after that, Valois was hired as the director of the academic support center and then ran the center. Adding to the many hats she has worn at the college, she now advises the student literary magazine *A Certain Slant* and is currently the Chair of the English Department.

Valois grew up in Leominster, has three children, and lives with her partner, Catherine. "And we have a cat that is just a miserable

asshole," she joked, adding, "We love this cat, even though he pees in our shoes and all he cares about is food. He's such an a**hole, but we love him."

She has two sisters and a brother that attended the Mount. Even though she presently resides an hour away in Northampton, she stated, "I drive here every day, and I feel like I get to make a difference in people's lives that aren't too different from mine. There's a lot of years and I'm old as dirt." She laughed, saying, "But I feel that I can connect to students here in many ways, and I wouldn't want to teach at a private college or university. I don't think I would even do a good job teaching at a place where people come with a lot of privilege; I would feel like an imposter. Although I spent many years feeling like an imposter here, it took me a long time to feel like I belonged and that I deserved to teach here."

After graduating from high school, Valois went to college to be an English major. She explained, "I just knew that I wanted to study English." She pursued her degree, taking classes at Northeastern, Hampshire College, and UMass. She also studied abroad in Sweden, where she ended up living for ten years. "I loved it. It was life-changing for me. I just >>>

had to be on my own to grow and I couldn't do that anywhere close to my family. So off I went [to Sweden], and it changed who I was."

While living in Sweden, Valois shared that she did clerical work, secretary work, taught ESL, and found a good job working at a little English bookstore for about five years before going to UMass to get an MFA in writing. "I just adored my time at UMass, and that's when I started teaching composition and then



Carla Zotolli

By Isabelle Mascary
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Carla Zotolli, the Executive Director of Development and the Mount Wachusett Community College Foundation, has been working at the Mount for nine years. She oversees fundraising and runs the MWCC Foundation. She was born in Northampton

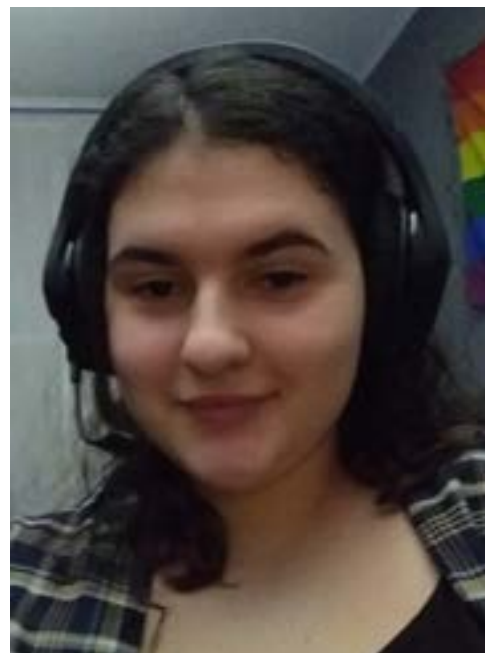
and raised in Princeton, Massachusetts.

Fundraising was not always her background; business was. She explained, "I look at this as trying to fund a bunch of small businesses. I look at scholarships as small businesses." A question she always asks herself is, "How am I going to fund that?"

Zotolli is a lot more hands-on than anyone else in her job at most community colleges. Although other people in her position would create an annual fund, raise money, and then allow the funds to be controlled by someone else, Zotolli is the opposite. "I learned that I like to control the money because I treat this money like it's my own," she said. "I hate for a cent to be spent on what it's not supposed to be spent on."

Out of college, she moved to Los Angeles and worked in comedy for HBO. "I worked for a couple of shows out there." Due to a writers' strike at the time, Zotolli decided it was time to go back home. "I came home, and I ran my family's businesses for years." >>>

Her family's business consisted of restaurants and rental property. After running the family business for some time, Zotolli decided she wanted to run for office. "I went back to college to get my Masters in Public Policy, worked in the state house for senator Harriet Chandler, and realized that I could never lie enough to get an election in public office," she said with a laugh.



Sophia Spier

By Luke Guertin
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Sophia Spier, an eighteen-year-old Professional Writing student at MWCC, has overcome much adversity to stand where she is today.

Most recently, the struggle was with college. On the subject, she explained, "I wanted to major in linguistics or English. Remote learning was tough, and I failed some classes that year. That prevented me from getting into any four-year intuitions." Sophia decided on the Mount based on others' positive recommendations for the school. While community college was not her first

plan, it's not one that she regrets.

Along with surviving remote learning and graduating, the transition to college was difficult. The first semester was lonely, as making friends in the beginning was difficult, and her schedule was ridden with filler classes. When compared to high school, Sophia admitted that college is, "all in all, a lot better than high school." The four-year plan, for her, "was the standard, what everyone else did." But going to a community college has revealed to her that her "classes are just as good, if not better," than those at a four-year institution. "Classes are smaller, and the professors are more invested in student success," she explained.

Reading, along with theater, got her through some of the struggles of remote learning. Learning over Zoom, being separated from friends and teachers, dampened her final year of high school. It was during that time that her career path changed from theater acting to working in a library. Her real sense of pleasure comes from books and reading. "I've grown into an addiction to buying books that I'm never going to finish," said Spier. In her bedroom at home, her bookshelf is double-stacked. With a completed education, she hopes to one day be surrounded by books for a >>>

living. "The library fostered my love for reading, and I want to do that for other kids," she enthused. Reading has motivated her to write, to keep moving forward. Writing also gives her a sense of pleasure, despite not necessarily being a career option. "I do two types of writing: I write fiction for joy, and I journal in a diary for the sake of my sanity."

Life outside of school is just as complicated.

Ann Reynolds Continued

While she attended school for her master's in rehabilitation counseling, Reynolds still worked part time. "I have two roles, but they mesh well," she said. "One moment you're working with student-parents, and the next moment you're working with students with disabilities."

Admittedly, academics were not her strongest suit as a teenager. "I left school at sixteen. I was not academic at all," she shared, explaining, "I ran out of the school gates at sixteen and didn't turn back." Despite leaving school at a young age, Reynolds was fortunate enough to secure a job at a local department store that sent her to college twice a week. "It was like a technical school," she said. Off to London she went to learn how to set up window displays and interior displays for stores. "I loved what I did, and I did that for years." Reynolds also traveled and had a successful business before traveling to Australia on a whim, where she met her husband.

"We lived in England for the first four years," she said. "We had two children there, and then we came here and had two children here. Two Americans and two British; two boys and two girls."

The cultural lifestyles were definitely different. During her first few years in the United States, Reynolds shares that she was

depressed. "I was a young mom, and I was six months pregnant when I came here," she said. "I already had a one-year-old and I had a three-year-old, so it was tough."

After slowly acclimating, she found herself in between two worlds, with one foot in the US and one foot in England. While getting used to American culture, Reynolds visited

"Time management and communication are keys to anything in life. Use a planner and always ask questions."

– Ann Reynolds

home as often as she could with her husband and children. For Reynolds, it was interesting to witness her children flip between the two languages, considering that two of them were born in England. "There's different words for different things, like a biscuit is a cookie, a nappy is a diaper." She shared. "They [her children] flipped between that fairly easily." Last year was the first time Reynolds has gone to England since her father died. "We've gone

there for vacation, and here we are spending time in a familiar place, but none of it was familiar to me because we haven't been there for so long." Despite it all, she stated, "I still say home is England."

When others learn of her background, a common question that she is always asked revolves around the royal family. "A lot of people ask about the royal family, but I do not know them," she admitted with a laugh. "I didn't know them then, and I most certainly don't know them now."

When asked what she does to destress, she stated, "I do like to watch a good series on TV, and I do read a lot." Her favorite book is *The Red Tent*. Recalling a past time, she recalled that she used to belong to a book club many years ago. She was fascinated and amazed by a book called *The Women's Room* by Marlene French and recommended it to the group. "It was very feminist, and my mind was blown," she explained. "I suggested we read *The Women's Room* because I remember it being really good. Now we have a group of women reading a 1960s, very feminine book, and they go, 'What the heck?'" Outside of reading, Reynolds loves to travel with her husband and attend different concerts and plays. One of her challenges now is learning how to knit. "I keep trying, but then I become frustrated and leave it for months then go back at it," she said, laughing. "My mother was a knitter.

I'm going to get through it because I really want to knit."

What she admires most about her profession are the student-parents. "I'm impressed with how hard student parents work," she said. Even though she was a student-parent herself prior to joining the Mount community, she said, "I was fortunate enough to have a significant other to support me. Some don't." At the time, Reynolds had one child in college, one in high school, and two in middle school. "Having young children, especially in this climate, is so hard," she expressed. "I tip my hat out to those who do this alone."

To help with that, Reynolds can connect students to the services that MWCC offers. Whether it's a student facing eviction or not knowing how they are going to put food on the table, though she may not have all the answers, "I can definitely try to help get students connected so they succeed in school," she reassured.

Her words of advice to students are, "Time management and communication are keys to anything in life. Use a planner and always ask questions." She said, "If you're unsure of how to communicate with a professor or department but you know someone on campus that you can talk to, go and ask them for help to do it." There's never, as they say, a stupid question.

Michelle Valois Continued

creative writing and other things." Valois enjoyed teaching at a community college more than at a four-year university because of the diversity of the student body. "You get all kinds of students, and I love that."

When she finished teaching, she was an adjunct for a year and got her first-time job. "I am very lucky because it's a hard job market, but I'm very grateful to the first Dean who hired me. His name is Dr. Richard Shine." She taught at Quinsigamond Community College for a year and Springfield Technical Community College for a few years.

When asked what she likes most about her profession, Valois replied with great joy, "The students; I love my students. And I have wonderful colleagues, and I have a lot of fun with them."

Highlighting that her happy place is in class with her students, Valois shared, "There are times where I have to give the riot act to get some students to start getting their work in, but that comes with the territory of being a professor."

She continued to gush about her students, saying, "The students are amazing, and they always surprise me." Whether it's a student's insight, their responses, or their interpretation of different materials they have watched or read, "Their creative writing always delights and surprises me. I love this population of students so much."

Regarding the stereotypes about college professors, Valois reflected on it, stating, "I don't like that people often don't understand how hard we work and at the same time, I don't like that some of my colleagues are lazy." She explained with full honesty, "Most

of the people I teach with are hard-working, dedicated, and they take their profession seriously. And then there are always a few a-holes who just shouldn't be in this profession. I don't know why they are there, but they are a minority."

Valois expressed concern about the fear people have about academia, "I feel like this country in general tends to be a little afraid of intellect. And if you teach in academia, if you teach in higher education, even at a community college, you are engaging in intellectual ideas, and you're hoping your students become proficient in the activity of being an

"There's no place in a public institution for that kind of hatefulness."

– Michelle Valois

intellectual themselves, and growing their critical thinking capacity." She mentioned that one of her favorite writers, James Baldwin, wrote so eloquently fifty years ago about how Americans distrust intellectuals and ideas. "I think it's something that is still relevant today. The fact is that it doesn't get recognized, even among people at the college, and that can be sad and frustrating."

One pivotal challenge she's faced has been increasing awareness for the LGBTQIA+ community on campus. Fifteen years ago, a Christian group decided that they were going to pass out handouts on conversion literature

to gay, lesbian, and queer students in an effort to convert them. "There was a small minority of outraged faculty, staff, and a lot of outraged students," Valois shared. "But there was a majority of either quiet people who did not want to say this is wrong or people who felt that they [the Christian Group] had a right to do that, and it was terrible. I think if it happened today at the college, a lot of people would be reacting very differently, but this was really hard."

During that time, Valois applied for another job because she felt as though she couldn't work in such an environment because she is a queer professor. Fortunately, Valois remained at the Mount and took on the task of making the learning environment better for

explained, "The college never made a formal statement that they did not support it, and the absence of saying that this is wrong sends a very loud message." Valois expected more outrage, but the administration at the time was very reticent. "I know it would be different today because I know the President of our college [now] would have behaved differently because times have changed."

Valois today sees the result of raising awareness, and the work towards these causes has made a difference. "The campus has opened up a lot. We have gender neutral bathrooms. We have organizations on campus that are interested in talking about racial inequality. We have conversations on campus that are really good and powerful. Shelley Nicholson in the Brewer Center has done a lot."

Valois is a published poet, and when she's not writing or teaching, she is a big fan of the card game called Magic The Gathering. "It's mainly played by young men and teenagers, and I'm usually the only woman and often the only person over fifty. But I don't care; I love it."

Aside from writing and publishing, Valois also enjoys spending time with her family, playing tennis, playing scrabble, and traveling. "I've published a lot of poetry and essays. I am working on a book, and I hope that will be done by the early part of next year."

Her advice to students is, "You belong here. Don't let anyone tell you that you don't belong." Being a first-generation college student, she said, "My parents did not understand why the hell I wanted to study English. I think they thought maybe I would be a teacher, a third-grade teacher; this was not their world view at all, but don't let anybody tell you that you don't belong."

Carla Zotolli Continued

Changing avenues, Zotolli worked as Chief of Staff for a large non-profit organization called RCAP, which is an organization that helps low-income families, senior housing, and aids with Section 8 vouchers, to name a few of the services offered.

"I enjoyed that up until I had to oversee a program." Zotolli explained that because Massachusetts is a right to shelter state, if a person comes to Massachusetts and they are homeless with a family, "The state has to find you housing or something," she said. In order to fulfill that obligation, the state housed homeless families in hotel rooms. "All of a sudden, in the state of Massachusetts, there were almost 3,000 mothers and children that had been warehoused in hotels for years," she said.

Therefore, Zotolli had to oversee taking those families from Central Massachusetts and getting them into Section 8 housing. "I'll tell you that beat the hell out of me," she said somberly, "Going into hotel rooms and talking to these poor mothers with their kids— some of these kids have been living in hotel rooms with just a microwave to warm their food for years." Despite being able to get these families a nice place, it was hard to watch these women repeat the cycle of taking their abusive boyfriends back. "Honestly, I was not trained for that. I wanted to help everyone, but seeing that killed me inside," she admitted.

When a position opened at the Mount, Zotolli said, "I jumped right on it because I can help people, it's happy, and there is not

this feeling of negativity, so I can change people's lives every day."

As if her plate isn't already full, she said, "I am actually about to reopen a restaurant, too. My daughter was on her honeymoon when I called her and said, 'Hey, honey, you have always wanted to own a restaurant.'" And just like that, according to Zotolli, they have been

"I jumped right on it because I can help people, it's happy, and there is not this feeling of negativity, so I can change people's lives every day."

— Carla Zotolli

renovating it for years and plan to open in the next month. "My daughter is going to run that [business], but I am going to stay here," she said. "It's in Princeton. I'll be involved, but my daughter will do the day-to-day work."

Some of her hobbies include working out, cooking, and traveling with her daughter. "My daughter and I really love different cultures through food and wine. That's why the restaurant is a good fit for us," she said.

The most difficult thing about her position is her need to fix an issue right away. "I come from a business background," she reiterated, "and I'm very careful; I'm a planner. I do not like to let things go." She said and added, "I feel that it's really important to serve our students the best way we can and in the most

efficient way that we can."

Acknowledging that a lot of students are first generation students and don't necessarily know how things work, five years ago it was decided that there needed to be some real alignment within the school. Zotolli was able to find a gentleman who donated \$6,000 to the college for career alignment. This donation made it possible to bring in a lot of tools for students to use to figure out what their aptitudes were. "Just because [a student]

thinks they want to be a nurse and then spend their first year there and realize they hate blood, that's probably not a good thing," she chuckled, "A student should probably find that out ahead of time."

An intense online board was created to have students engage in the process of enrolling and applying for financial aid. This process tutors a student through it, and helps diminish the need of a student having to come to campus and relying on someone to tell them where they need to go if they have a question. "We created the career center and put in a lot of work to align it and try to give our students the easiest path," she shared. A lot of other schools call it 'guided pathways.' "I think you need to make it as easy as possible for

people," she said. "Why make it tough? That is solving the problem."

Demonstrating her strength in her problem solving skills, Zotolli noticed that there were some issues going on surrounding the food pantry and their food distribution. She learned of a group that was brought together by the United Way with the goal of bringing all of the food pantry regions together to figure out solutions on how to get food distributed. In the meantime, "We're actually trying to get a grant to get a truck and a driver full-time to just go to the food bank in Shrewsbury," she said.

Another thing, we found out that there was a need for and a lot of opportunities in banking in this area for people. "There are actually 875 jobs in Massachusetts for entry-level positions in banking." She shared, "The problem is that people your age don't go to banks, and half of them don't know the breadth of what banks do." The solution to these issues, Zotolli explained, is "We just put together a banking certificate that will be debuted on March 9th. It'll start in the summer. We worked with all of the local banks to find out what skills an entry-level person would need in order to work in banking. Anyone who graduates from this program will get a job."

When asked for a piece of advice for students, Zotolli offered some encouragement, stating, "Don't be afraid to ask; if you don't know something, ask. Explore your range of possibilities before you decide on a major. You can start here and go somewhere else. Don't get discouraged and don't give up because you will never get ahead if you don't take that first step."

Sophia Spier Continued

When asked about her siblings, she asked, "Do you want to know how many total or how many I've met?" Sophia knows of nine and has met three. After her mother passed away in 2012, Spier was surprised to find out that she had more siblings than she knew about. She reflected on this and said, "It does bother me. I wonder what kind of relationships we would have."

she slept over at a friend's house. "While it affected me emotionally, I never understood why, so I mostly ignored it." One experience she recalled specifically was when she was younger and out at the store with her parents. While her mother wandered elsewhere, Spier stated that her father started dragging her around because she was "being a brat." When a stranger—a white man—came over, he

"No, I wouldn't change anything. I'm happy the way I am, and I can't imagine my path being different."

— Sophia Spier

No family situation is perfect, and Spier knows that there are challenges that come with how the world perceives family units. As a child with a white mother and Native American father, it was hard for her to understand how the world saw them together differently and how they saw her traditions differently. The different traditions she learned when friends came for sleepovers or when

was concerned to see a Native American man dragging a little white girl around. "I never thought about issues like those too seriously... so I ignored it," she admitted.

However, when asked if she would have changed anything about her past to end up where she is, she emphasized, "No, I wouldn't change anything. I'm happy the way I am, and I can't imagine my path being different."

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!

Have your own thoughts on a TV show, film, book, or video game?
Write a review and send it to mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu
It may just end up in our next issue!

Creative Writing

An English Teacher's Last Will

By Michelle Valois

When I am dead, don't decorate my bones.
No pearls to mask the rotting of my teeth.
Close my eyes but place on them no stone
nor sapphire gems, nor on my head a wreath.

Burn all my papers. Give away my clothes
to anyone who needs them more than me.
Cash in my stocks and bonds - not much I know -
but treat yourselves to some frivolity.

I loved you dear. I loved as best I could.
Keep that thought and a memory or two
close to your heart, tucked safe as once I would
sing you to sleep when near your bedtime drew.

I failed to teach you three to love my Will.

Yet this last will will willingly fulfill.

Send your finished works of 1,000 words or less to mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu.

Love, Light, and Livvy

By William A. Lefrancois

In life, one their best tries to make the world better;
Using precious time, treasure and talent; each, to their own merits.
Olivia Newton-John, our Livvy, believed in this creed to the letter;
Her gifts of love, the world imaginatively, impulsively, instantly inherits.

In music's theater, few could ever compare to her gift of song;
Each word lovingly crafted, every melody a sheer delight.
Grammy recognized, gold records achieved, the list is infinitely long;
Livvy spread love by measure; tunes with humble, hesitant, heartfelt height.

Livvy's love was not solely for the stage, it touched the fragile ill;
Her fight with cancer well-known, her tireless work to light the way to hope.
Unfailing energy, valiant soul of dedication that would not be still;
Her soul poured into her mission, faith surmounting steep slippery slope.

Livvy's light also shone on Gaia mother earth; her wish it to protect;
Trees to save, dolphins to rescue; nature's Magic ally.
Using song and example, Suddenly the world made more perfect;
Livvy's Physical essence, righteous resolute resounding rally.

Livvy at peace rests, having made the world a better, more caring place;
Even in her absence, the good work continues in other loving hands;
Her legacy future ensured, Livvy's faith will win cancer's hateful race.
Livvy's love and light, a beacon to all loving, lasting, lusting lands.

Mad March

By William A. Lefrancois

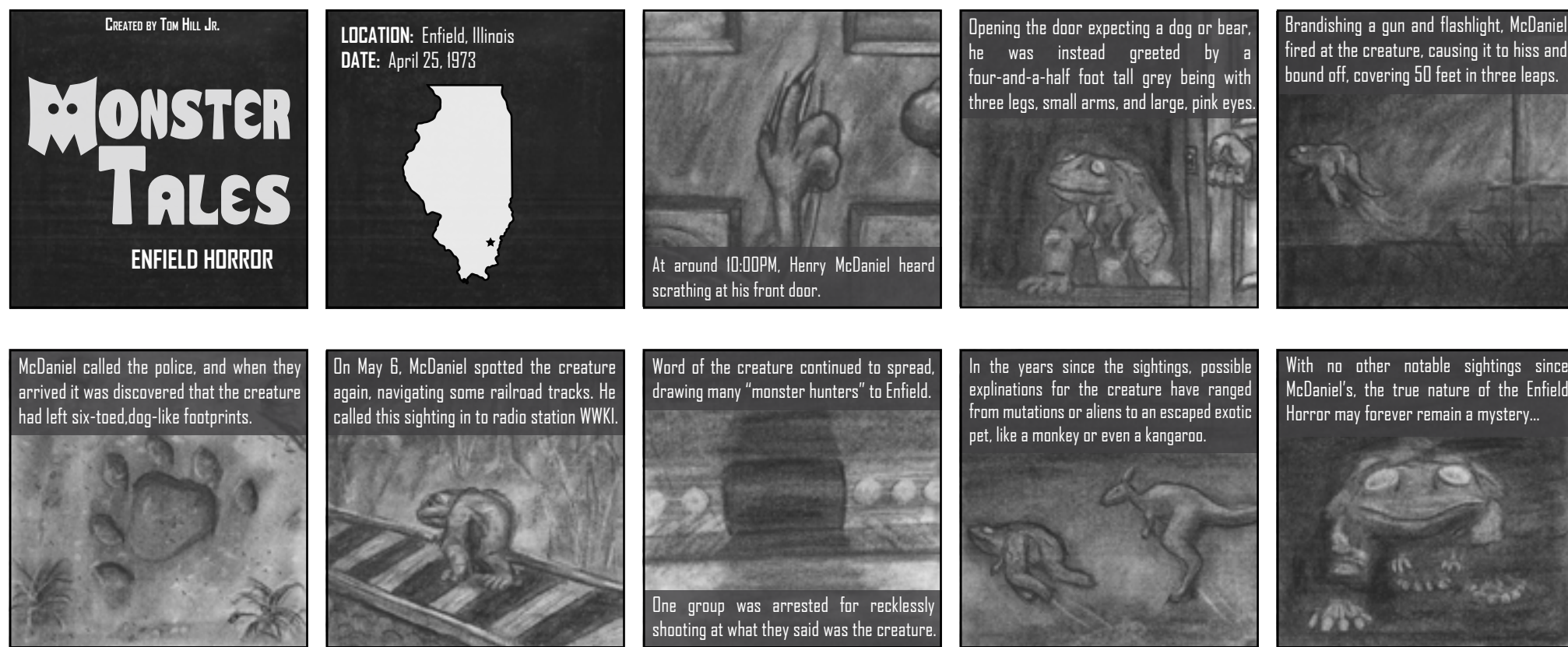
Every month is unique, February flirty then March mad;
Twelve personalities in every calendar, each as different as the year.
The passing of time brings each into view, some happy and some sad;
No matter the season, each month is dutiful, desirable, distant dear.

Time to ponder anew, the days and weeks that lie ahead;
Will success fill our time, will fortune come our way?
The days we aspire to, some full of happiness and some we dread.
The sum of these hours; daring, dreaming, delightful day!

The sun rises on each date, the moon sees each to bed;
What happens in between, it is all within our power.
How we face the challenge, with courage or with dread;
Is a testimonial to character; true, tender, tearful tower.

March is known for many things, winds gusting with rage!
A time of transition, from the depths of frozen winter to thawing spring.
These diurnal traits, faithfully replicated with every age;
Speak volumes of time; burdensome, bright, beauty bring.

February bridges us to cold and dark; short, sightless days.
March leads to a promise of warmth and light, serene and green.
Our mood reflects this passage, moving from somber spirit to aspiring ways;
Shake off February, welcome mad March's multitudinous mean!



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Review: *Man of La Mancha* “The Impossible Dream” Comes to the Mount

By Elysian Alder
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Beginning on February 24th, the Theater at the Mount’s 2023 season kicked off to a promising start with the production of the five-time Tony Award-winning 1965 musical, *Man of La Mancha*.

Originally written by Dale Wasserman, *Man of La Mancha* is set in the late sixteenth century and tells the story of the failed poet, actor, and tax collector, Miguel de Cervantes (Chris Cenotti), who has been apprehended by the Spanish Inquisition and imprisoned in a dungeon for attempting to put a lien on a church monastery. Once imprisoned, Cervantes and his faithful manservant, Sancho Panza (Craig Cormier), find themselves at the mercy of a colorful cast of fellow prisoners who insist that Cervantes must partake in a mock trial before them all or risk losing the trunk of possessions he’s brought with him into the cell. Cervantes agrees, but only under the condition that he and Sancho be allowed to deliver their ‘defense’ in the form of a fantastical play, depicting the quest of a mind-addled gentleman named Alonso Quijano, who seeks adventure



Photo by Elysian Alder

The cast listing for Theater at the Mount’s *Man of La Mancha*

and dons the persona of a knight-errant, titling himself Don Quixote, the Lord of La Mancha, and making the devoted Sancho out to be his squire.

As demonstrated by last season’s *The Play That Goes Wrong*, the performers and staff of the Theater at the Mount were more than well-equipped to deliver a superb performance of a play-within-a-play. The production staff outdid themselves with this one, though, utilizing a single set design and seamlessly transforming the stage into whichever setting they needed for the scenes, whether it be a dungeon cell, Renaissance-era tavern and inn, starry courtyard, church confessional,

where plenty of other stellar voices to help round out any rough edges, including the returning Theater at the Mount star Andrea Moore in the role of love interest and steely girl-boss Aldonza and the phenomenal Taylor Lawton as the church “Padre” of the cast, both of whom left the audience with chills.

It can certainly be said that some of the content within the musical did not age especially well, and the Theater at the Mount staff were right to include a disclaimer on the show’s web page indicating that there would be potentially sensitive, adult content within the narrative that may not suit all audiences, but that didn’t seem to have an impact on the turn-out. It was a jam-packed theater, with the pleasant staff and ushers in constant motion, directing excited patrons to their seats and offering assistance wherever it was needed.

Not everything was as smooth sailing as it seemed, however. Prior to the start of the production, theater director Gail Steele took to the stage to deliver some pre-show announcements, beginning first by thanking the audience for making it out despite the region experiencing

intense snowfall and inclement weather. Additionally, Steele provided some insight into why some patrons may have had a difficult time purchasing tickets. The reason? Their ticketing system experienced a cyber-attack, resulting in a temporary fix being implemented. This didn’t stop Steele from sharing some good news on the tail-end of that, stating that the theater had sold “1200 season tickets, which is close to pre-Covid numbers.”

Steele also showed confidence and enthusiasm for the *Man of La Mancha* production, assuring the audience that, “If you’re not a season ticket holder, I have a feeling that after you see this show, you’ll be saying, ‘darn, I wish I was a season ticket holder.’”

InvolveMOUNT March Events:

March 14: “JINDO - Musical BINGO.”
12:30PM–1:30PM. Student Center & Zoom.

March 16: “Bi-Weekly Meeting.”
4:00PM–5:00PM. Online.

March 21: “Career Services On-Demand.”
10:30AM–12:30PM. Room H104 - Career Services.

March 21: “SGA Biweekly Meeting.”
4:30PM–7:00PM. Room S105 & Zoom.

March 21: “JINDO - Musical BINGO.”
7:00PM–8:00PM. Zoom.

March 22: “Workforce Wednesday - Clinical & Support Options, Inc.”
10:00AM–1:00PM. Across from Student Services.

March 22: “Career Services On-Demand.”
2:00PM–4:00PM. Room H104 - Career Services.

March 23: “THRIVE: Coffee Conversations”
10:00AM–11:00AM. Room H106 - THRIVE Center.

March 24: “CATS Programming Group Meeting.”
12:30PM–1:30PM. Room W101 & Zoom.

March 27: “Getting Ready to Register.”
12:30PM–1:30PM. Room H107 - ACT Atrium.

March 27: “Therapy Dogs on Campus.”
12:30PM–1:30PM. Student Center.

March 28: “Career Services On-Demand.”
10:30AM–12:30PM. Room H104 - Career Services.

March 28: “JINDO - Musical BINGO.”
12:30PM–1:30PM. Student Center & Zoom.

March 29: “Workforce Wednesday - Open Sky Community Services.”
10:00AM–1:00PM. Across from Student Services.

March 29: “Pizza with the President.”
12:30PM–1:30PM. Student Center.

March 29: “SCNAVTA Bake Sale.”
12:30PM–2:30PM. Student Center.

March 29: “Career Services On-Demand.”
2:00PM–4:00PM. Room H104 - Career Services.

March 30: “Bi-Weekly Meeting.”
4:00PM–5:00PM. Online.

March 30: “Tropical Sands DJ Dance Party.”
5:00PM–9:00PM. South Cafe.

March 31: “CATS Programming Group Meeting.”
12:30PM–1:30PM. Room W101 & Zoom.

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