

Food for Thought

Investigating Food Insecurity at the Mount

By **Desiree Leader**

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

According to the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance, 1 out of 7 people in Massachusetts receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, formerly known as food stamps. Food insecurity is a global issue, and it is no different at the Mount.

With a recent reduction in additional supplemental benefits, the local demand on food pantries is at an all-time high. According to Pam Guild, President of the Board of Directors at the Wachusett Food Pantry in Sterling, there

has been a major uptick in recipients during and since the COVID-19 pandemic because “prices are going up all over for basics.”

This can also be seen at the food pantry at Mount Wachusett Community College. According to Mike Mosher, a May graduate who is doing a work-study at the Mount, 100 new students registered for the food pantry in September, bringing the total who benefit from its services to about 750 students. Mosher, who helps out in the Brewer Center as well as the Food Pantry, explained that 100 more recipients equates to “1500 [more] snacks as well as

3,000 more food items.”

For both Mount Wachusett Community College and the Wachusett Food Pantry, a good portion of the items come from the Worcester Food Bank. They both also receive some monetary donations that help them buy some of the necessities needed. At the Mount, fresh produce boxes are obtained from Growing Places, a non-profit organization in Leominster, Massachusetts. They get 12 boxes a week, and they are given to students on a first-come, first-served basis.

Mina Girouard, a work-study

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Photo by Tom Hill Jr.

Fall hours for the Food for Thought Food Pantry

Profile: Puneet Kumar

A Journey of Determination from India to the USA

By **Kent Yang**

OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Within the diverse cultures of Mount Wachusett Community College is Puneet Kumar, a 19-year-old biology major. One year ago, when he was just 18 years old, Kumar left his home in Punjab, India and started his journey to America, bringing with him not just his cherished cultural heritage but also his profound determination to achieve his dreams of becoming a doctor, more specifically: a neurosurgeon. Kumar has always wanted to be a doctor, explaining that his reasons were “...not just for a good standard or passion but also for love and better understanding for the people I treat. I chose neuroscience because the brain has the most complex structures which runs the whole body

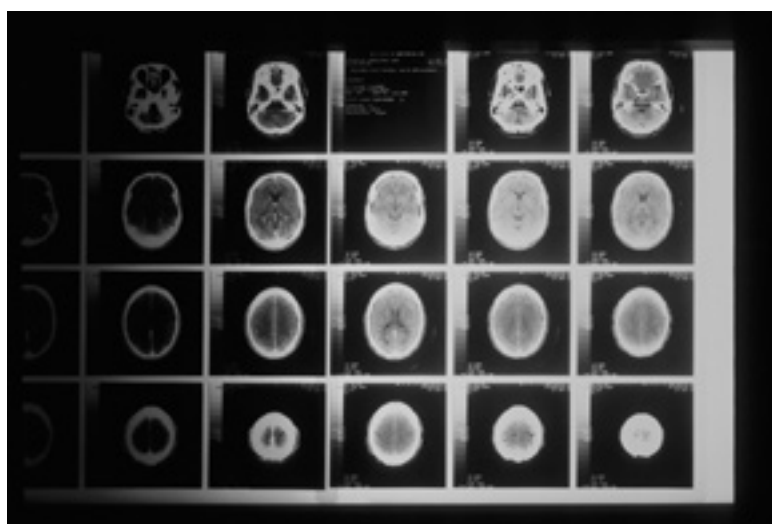


Photo by National Cancer Institute from Unsplash

CAT scans of a human brain for study by neurosurgeons

...I just wanted to learn the complexities of the brain and spinal cord to fulfill my dream.”

Kumar decided to study at the Mount because he has family members who live nearby. “It was [also] the best school to transfer [to] from my school back in India,” he said. “The energy here is upbeat and

optimistic, and the environment is very clean.” Although he is not currently associated with any clubs, he has found the staff and faculty to be very helpful.

Outside of school, Kumar works as a store clerk at Hannaford. In his free time, he enjoys listening to music, contemplating the world’s

issues and future possibilities, and cooking. “I can cook Indian food and I’m still struggling to find new vegan recipes around the world,” he shared. “My personal favorite to cook is fried rice, gobi ki sabji, some snacks like samosa pakora and cheesechilly—all [of these] are Indian foods and snacks.”

Kumar’s homeland of Punjab, India is known for the production of sugarcane, rice, and wheat. His favorite food is roti, a round flatbread made from whole wheat flour native to the Indian subcontinent. Having lived in the United States for a year now, he has gained a genuine appreciation for the diversity in both the people and the food, but finds himself missing some aspects of home, stating that he “longs

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Food for Thought

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student in the Brewer Center, said that food scarcity is especially an issue for “those who are making too much to qualify for SNAP benefits.” In her experience, a lot of the people who benefit from the food pantry are single parents, and it can be difficult for them to obtain healthy food as “the cheapest thing is ramen” but the food pantry at the Mount offers healthier choices for them and their children.

Assistant Dean of Students Sabine Dupoux informs that there is not only a pantry on the main campus in Gardner, but there is one at the Leominster campus, as well. As a matter of fact, when the campus was redesigned, one of the first things she did was to ensure that the pantry was in an area where it would be visible and easily accessible for all. As a result, it is located right by the back parking

lot entrance, where students can see it right where they come in. “We’re developing things that we’re doing within our food pantry services; we’re doing it all with the student in mind,” she explained. She credited some of the increase in use of the campus food pantry to several things,

pop in and grab lunch, a snack, and a drink anytime they’d like. The pantry is there for every student enrolled in at least a one-credit course. They only need to register.

As for whether students are aware of the food pantry or not, Kayleigh Raskett, a

is not the only way the word is getting out. Makenna Mongeon, another student at the Mount, was made aware of it through her nutrition professor. She believes that food is “pretty expensive for something everyone needs to survive.”

What are ways that residents

When asked about donations, Assistant Dean Dupoux stated that non-perishable items are always needed, and canned goods such as meat and vegetables can go a long way. She also suggested that special items such as cake mix and frosting can be helpful for a family celebrating a birthday. When donating, it’s important to check expiration dates, as pantries cannot accept expired food. There is also a big demand for can openers.

The most important thing, she mentioned, is that we talk about these issues and have those difficult conversations. Once we get rid of the stigma surrounding food insecurity, it will be easier to combat it. “Having access to healthy food is a basic need,” said Dupoux.

Thanks to local food pantries, we can begin to fulfill that need.

‘100 new students registered for the food pantry in September, bringing the total who benefit from its services to about 750 students.’

including its being announced at student orientation and the rise in the cost of food and reduction of food-related benefits.

There are no income guidelines or verifications necessary to receive food services at the school. Mosher indicated that every student is eligible and can

Gateway student, explained that she is aware because she has friends that have benefited from it. David Simpson, another Gateway student, knows people that struggle. He has friends that use the food pantry and thinks it is a “super awesome program!”

But new student orientation

and students can help with the issue of food insecurity? Food pantries are a great place to start. Guild recommends volunteering at your local pantry, for starters. “We always need volunteers,” she declared. She also suggested organizing a food drive or writing a donation check.

Journey of Determination

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Photo by Anshu A from Unsplash
Roti, an Indian flatbread

to find authentic Indian cuisine.”

Kumar’s culture values warm greetings, optimism, and respect for elders and these principles are deeply ingrained in his heart. He carries this respect into every part of his life. “There is so much [to learn] about India that it can take so many years to learn,” said Kumar. Even though he may be far from home, he is driven each day by his personal motivation, his faith in God, and the love of his parents.

His mother and father made the journey from India to America with him to provide him with opportunities for a good job and wealth, and he does not want the sacrifices that they made to go to waste. “Otherwise they would have never come here.

“Believe in yourself, work hard, don’t change your goals.”

- Puneet Kumar

They know that sometimes being lonely is a depressing thing, so... they support me and teach me life advice so that I can carry their teachings and prove that [their] hard work and blessings bring success to my life.”

In an effort to motivate and inspire those who, like him, are

diligently pursuing their dreams, Kumar says, “I want to give motivation to those who are working hard and pursuing their dreams. Believe in yourself, work hard, don’t change your goals. God and the blessing from your mom and dad is always with you. Keep pushing forward.”

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!



Wanted for Questioning

Community Reflection on the Manhunt for Aaron Pennington

By Sam LeMay

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Aaron Pennington remains the figure of interest in the troubling events that unfolded on October 22nd. The incident, which involved the fatal shooting of his wife, Breanne Pennington, and his subsequent flight, has prompted students and staff at the Mount to reflect upon their sense of security in the area. As of this issue's publication date, the latest press release from Massachusetts State Police indicates that they have suspended their search, confirming that although they haven't found him, they are assuming he is still alive until a body is found. On the morning of October 23rd, an email from MWCC Student Services reached the student body, advising them to immediately contact authorities if they encounter anyone matching Pennington's description.

Aaron Pennington stands as the prime suspect in the October 22nd shooting of Breanne Pennington. Law enforcement

agencies leading the search for Pennington, an Air Force veteran, have issued a warning that he is to be considered armed and dangerous. According to news

helicopters out, and they were going mostly around Lake Wampanoag and Ashburnham... that lake is right near my brother's house so that made me

sources, friends of the couple have disclosed that Pennington had grappled with long-standing mental health challenges, at times even expressing thoughts of self-harm. It was also revealed that Breanne had been planning to relocate with their four children due to ongoing marital issues.

Some students at the Mount did feel directly affected by the situation. Annika Rodriquenz, a Pathways student, shared her connection to the unfolding events, stating, "There were

a little bit nervous." Other students who don't live in the area didn't feel particularly affected but stated that they feel awful about the news. Kacie Gallagher, another Pathways student at the Mount, remarked, "I do just feel like he's dead and no longer a threat."

MWCC's President James Vander Hooven revealed his own personal turmoil in response to the situation, saying, "I feel sick about it... and I was very concerned."

Vander Hooven went on to

between something that is random and something that is a little bit more isolated," he said, while also expressing how important it is to process such circumstances and allow oneself to navigate the array of emotions they evoke.

emphasize the significance in recognizing the incident as a domestic matter. "He could be a threat to anyone who threatens him but there is a difference

have an impact on people."

**- James Vander Hooven
President**

He advocates for open lines of communication, encouraging individuals to lean on their support networks and seek guidance whenever required. "...Gardner is such a close community that they didn't need to be connected to the college to

have an impact on people." In recent years, crime rates in Gardner have gone down by about 14%, while Massachusetts as a whole has seen the crime rates go up by about 3%. Gardner, in its dedicated efforts to enhance public safety and create a secure community, has not only managed to buck the statewide trend but has also set an encouraging example of effective crime prevention and law enforcement strategies.

Profile: Arlo Caisse

Gateway Student Talks 'Opportunity' and Community at the Mount



Photo by Arlo Caisse

By Elysian Alder

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Arlo Caisse has been one of Mount Wachusett Community College's many dual enrollment students since they started the Gateway to College program in the fall of 2022, when they were just 16 years old. "I was homeschooled my whole life up until I started here at MWCC as a Gateway student," said Caisse. Both Caisse and their sister are first-generation college students, and their sister is a former Gateway student herself. "My sister was the biggest reason I chose to go to college. I wanted

to learn, and I needed to learn some important things...things I could have learned at home, but my sister encouraged me to step out of my comfort zone and try something new."

Attending college has been full of unexpected, life-changing experiences for Caisse. "Originally school wasn't my priority. If you told me I would be in college right now, I probably would have laughed a little bit," they admitted.

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"Opportunity and Community"
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Opportunity and Community

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Since beginning their college career at the Mount, they've joined three of the student organizations on campus: the Campus Activity Team for Students (CATS), the Student Government Association (SGA), and the Sexuality and Gender Alliance (SAGA). "I firmly believe that being involved in your community is important!" explained Caisse. "It allows me to get out of my daily cycle of class and homework, [and] it gives me time for human interaction. I strongly advise everyone to find a welcoming community to be a part of."

Recent studies show that engaging in extracurricular activities heightens students' sense of connection with their college community, resulting in a 17% increase in this regard. Additionally, these activities often serve as a source of inspiration for students, motivating them to explore fields related to community service. As a matter of fact, 80% of college-bound students actively engage in public service at the college level. This commitment to helping others is a significant driving force, as emphasized by Caisse, who expressed, "All of [the] clubs mean a lot to me. I am very big on volunteer work and helping others." In addition to having the opportunity to help others, one of the other things they love the most about the Mount is the "supportive people" they've met since enrolling.

Although their experience has been largely a positive one, they've had to overcome some challenges, as well. "I tend to overwork myself," they admitted. "If there is anything I have learned from school, it's to take a break...Balancing school, clubs, home life, and work is a hard task but it is doable. You just need to plan it all out accordingly...Just make sure to take care of yourself too."

Coming from a homeschooled environment, there was a learning curve for them when it came to being in a classroom filled with other students and, consequently, distractions. "I was always by myself when it came to learning but now there

is a whole class."

When they're not devoting themselves to their classes and extracurricular activities, Caisse can be found spending time with their family, learning more about the things that interest them—such as photography, criminal justice, culinary arts,

and human services—and playing tabletop role-playing games, namely Dungeons & Dragons. "Ever since I was young, making characters with awesome backstories was my favorite thing to do. I have well over a dozen OCs (Original Characters) that I used for stories, D&D, and many

other things," they enthused. "It's so much fun to get groups together—big and small—to play a fun game like D&D."

Across the board, Caisse is a perfect example of adaptability, compassion, and resilience, demonstrating the courage to step out of one's comfort zone

and embrace new horizons. They hold a well-deserved optimism about their future, with a unique perspective on the word "opportunity."

In their own words, "...I don't mean [opportunities] that will get me on cool trips or...a better paying job. The opportunities I am looking forward to are ones where I can help people or make someone's day. I get the most joy out of life when I am doing something for someone else. Sometimes people say, 'you are born to do something,' and I believe it. I could have any job in the world, but it would mean nothing to me if I didn't have the opportunity to help someone else."

"I strongly advise everyone to find a welcoming community to be a part of."

- Arlo Caisse

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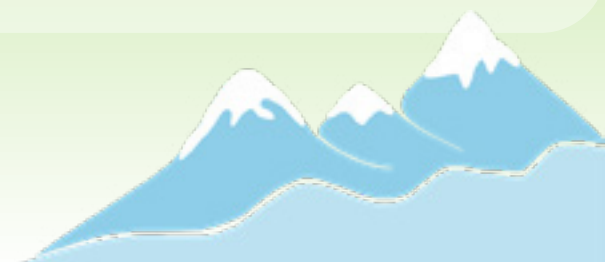
- ALL MATRICULATED MWCC STUDENTS WITH 15 OR MORE CREDITS
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ESTIMATED COST \$3,800 (INCLUDES AIRFARE, GROUND TRANSPORT, ACCOMMODATIONS, MOST MEALS, ENTRANCE FEES & GUIDED TOURS)

For more information, contact:

Prof. Heather Conn
(h_conn@mwccc.mass.edu)

Prof. Michelle Valois
(m_valois@mwcc.mass.edu)





Cybersecurity Awareness Month

By Kent Yang

OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Last month marked the 20th anniversary of Cybersecurity Awareness Month. This campaign was created in 2004 by the Department of Homeland Security and the National Cybersecurity Alliance to ensure every American has the resources needed to stay safe and secure online. This year, the focus of Cybersecurity Awareness Month was on four critical cybersecurity practices.

The first of these practices includes enabling Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA), a tool which adds another layer of protection to your account by requiring a security token or code to verify your login. This token is usually sent via text, email,

or through an app like Google authentication, depending on the user's selection or preference at the time of setting the MFA up.

The second practice is using strong, varied passwords. A good rule of thumb for passwords is to use uppercase, lowercase letters, numbers, and symbols. Password length should be at least 12 characters. Avoid using common phrases and words in your password. A reliable password manager is essential. Consider reputable password managers such as LastPass, 1Password, and NordPass.

The third practice is keeping your software up to date. Keep your device and software up to date to prevent zero-day attacks and vulnerabilities.

Lastly, the fourth practice is recognizing and reporting phishing. To recognize phishing, check the sender's email address and ensure the domain or what is between the emailname@____.xxx is spelled correctly. Beware of the use of urgent language as phishers may try to invoke fear and urgency to trick users into clicking on their links. Avoid clicking on links and downloading attachments in emails unless you're absolutely sure it's legitimate. You can hover on a link to see where they will really lead to before clicking. Check for misspellings and grammatical errors. Do not send sensitive information such as passwords, credit card numbers, or social security

numbers through email.

While most email providers have the option to report spam and phishing or to block and report senders, there are other channels that deal with phishing, too. Refer to your organization on reporting procedures. For MWCC students and staff, if you've received a suspicious email and are not sure if it's legitimate, do not click on any attachments. Instead, report the email to the MWCC IT Help Desk at helpdesk@mwcc.edu by using the forward function or call 866-520-7129 (option 1). If you've already clicked on the attachments, please change your account password immediately and report the incident to the MWCC IT Help Desk as soon as possible. They are available 24/7.

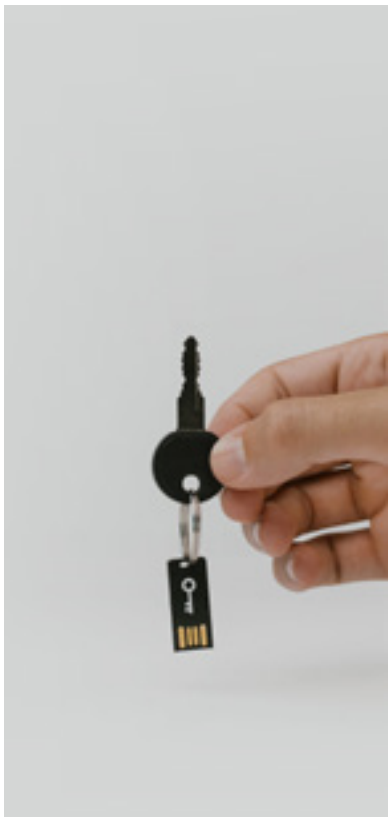


Photo by cottonbro studio from Pexels

For more website-exclusive tech articles on topics such as AMD, Apple, and Intel, visit [www.mountobserver.com/category/technology/!](http://www.mountobserver.com/category/technology/)

The Brains of the Digital World, Central Processing Unit (CPU)

By Kent Yang

OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Have you ever purchased a brand-new smartphone, laptop, or desktop and thought, "Wow! It's so fast!" The main reason for this, in conjunction with other components such as memory, graphics card, and solid-state storage, for day-to-day applications, would be because of the processor.

What is a Central Processing Unit or CPU? Think of it like the brain of the human body but instead of being for a body, it's for a computer. The CPU is a small but powerful component that processes and performs calculations from the instructions it receives. CPUs are sometimes referred to as "chips," and this is due to it being a main type of



Photo by Christian Wiediger from Unsplash

logic chip.

The main purpose of a CPU is to fetch, decode, execute, and write back. In a simplified overview, the process begins when the user inputs a command such as clicking on or in a program or typing something on

the keyboard. This generates a set of instructions or codes. The codes then go to the memory where the CPU will fetch the data and decode and execute it. It'll then generate the end result in the write back, and this is what the user will see on their display.

Why are CPUs so important? Nearly every electronic device has some sort of processor in them. They come in many forms and are used for things like gaming, photo and video editing, machine learning, smart thermostats that regulate the temperature of household appliances like refrigerators, inside handheld calculators, and more. In 1965, Gordon Moore, Intel's co-founder and chairman emeritus, stated that the number of transistors—fundamental electronic components acting as switches or amplifiers in circuits—on a chip would double every two years. Through careful observations over the next decade, he was proven correct. This phenomenon became known as Moore's Law. Fast forward to 2022, where some dare to say

that technological slowdowns have rendered Moore's Law dead. However, Intel's current CEO, Pat Gelsinger, assures that Moore's Law is "alive and well."

Some well-known and major tech companies, such as Amazon, Apple, AMD, Google, NVIDIA, and Qualcomm, utilize processor manufacturers like Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC), the world's largest contract chipmaker. Examples of their products include Amazon's Graviton4 w/ ArmV9 (TSMC 3NM), Apple's M3 series (TSMC 3NM), AMD's Epyc and Ryzen 7000 series (TSMC 5NM), Google's upcoming Tensor G5 chips, NVIDIA's upcoming H100 and A100 AI processors, and Qualcomm's Snapdragon 8+ Gen 1.



SCARYOKE!

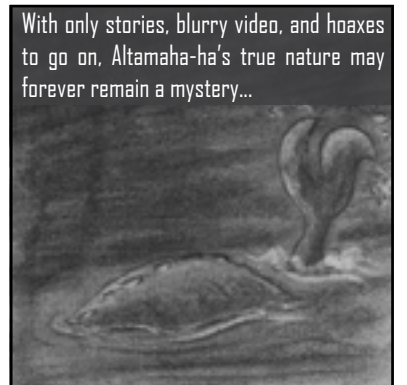
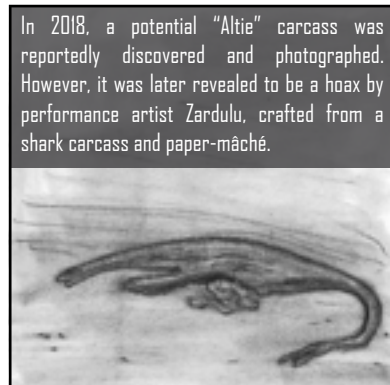
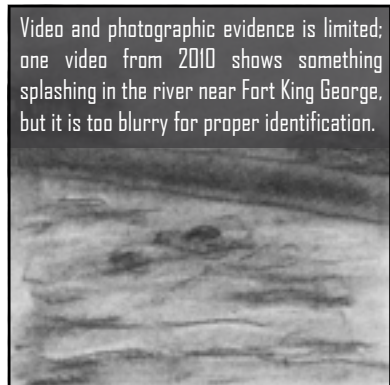
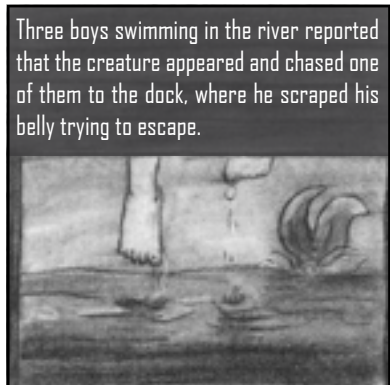
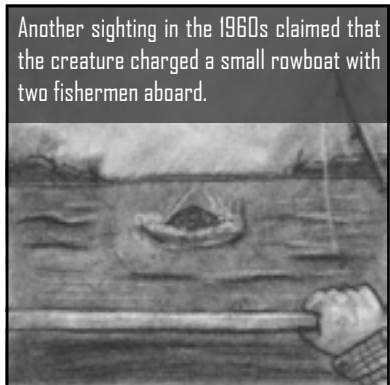
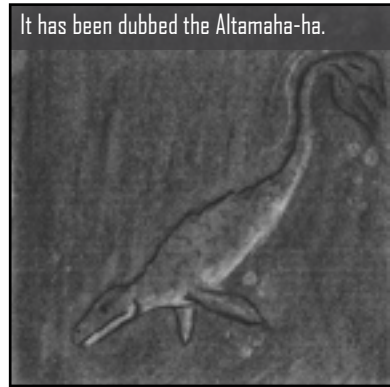
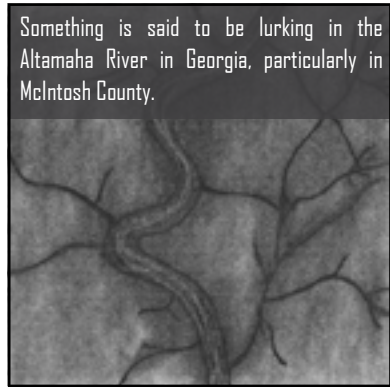
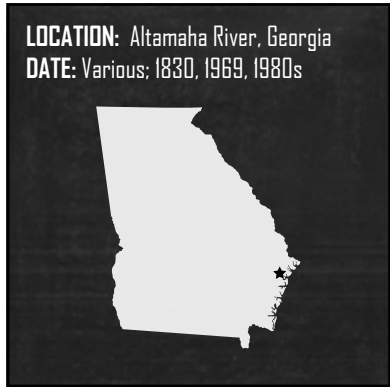
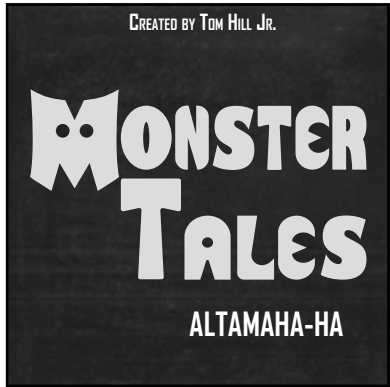


Photos by (clockwise from top-left): Francheska Alicea-Vazquez, Desiree Leader, Justina Johnson, Desiree Leader, Student Life

Clockwise from top-left: The entrance to Scaryoke; the Student Life organizers of Scaryoke sing Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody*; student Khygann Hobbs performs dressed as a witch; The exterior of the South Cafe decorated with horror posters; Marty the Mountain Lion performs for the audience; students perform karaoke



COMICS



Copyright Tom Hill Jr.

Creative Writing

No, Thanks

By Desiree Leader

Turkeys used to roam free here now they are yours for the taking along with everything else...the buffalo that are almost extinct and live only on farms, for food. The water, no longer clean, the land of the brave that is free no more - paid for with your taxes and our blood.

Malaria blankets paved trails of tears. We have our reservations about giving thanks, about your feasts with the food that we taught you to grow until you grew so big there was no room left

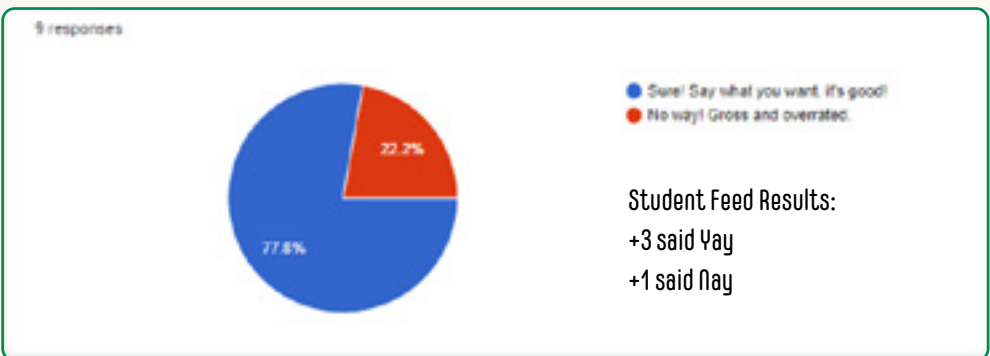
For us at the table. Celebrate your holiday of giving thanks? No thanks.

The Mount Observer Polls presents

Your Thoughts

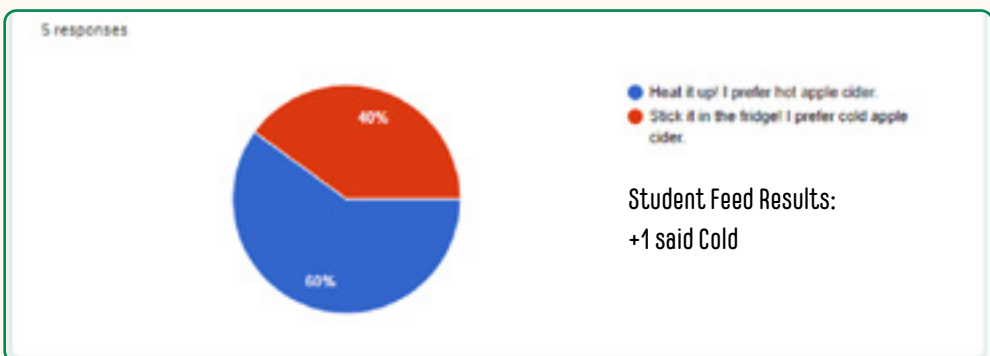
Interested in giving your thoughts in the next poll? Follow the Mount Observer on the iConnect Student App!

Pumpkin Spice: Yay or Nay?



GRAND TOTAL: 76.9% Yay | 23.1% Nay

Apple Cider: Hot or Cold?



GRAND TOTAL: 50% Hot | 50% Cold



Involvement MOUNT Events

Monday, November 20 2023 at 5:00 AM to Monday, November 20 2023 at 9:00 PM -
Open Gym Day @ Mount Fitness

Monday, November 20 2023 at 12:30 PM to Monday, November 20 2023 at 1:30 PM -
CATS Programming Group Meeting @ W110

Monday, November 20 2023 at 12:30 PM to Monday, November 20 2023 -
Pizza with the President @ Multipurpose Room H171

Monday, November 20 2023 at 4:00 PM to Monday, November 20 2023 at 5:00 PM -
SGA Biweekly Meeting @ Zoom

Monday, November 20 2023 at 4:00 PM to Monday, November 20 2023 at 5:00 PM -
Music Club Meeting @ Gardner Campus

Monday, November 20 2023 at 5:00 PM to Monday, November 20 2023 at 6:00 PM -
Mount Observer Weekly Meeting @ Zoom

Tuesday, November 21 2023 at 12:25 PM to Tuesday, November 21 2023 at 1:25 PM -
Cru Student Fellowship @ Gardner Campus | H385

Monday, November 27 2023 at 12:30 PM to Monday, November 27 2023 at 1:30 PM -
SAGA Bi-Weekly Meetings @ Zoom + Room H361

Monday, November 27 2023 at 12:30 PM to Monday, November 27 2023 at 1:30 PM -
Therapy Dogs on Campus @ Student Center

Monday, November 27 2023 at 2:30 PM to Monday, November 27 2023 at 3:30 PM -
Life Management Workshops @ Advising, Career & Transfer Room H107A

Monday, November 27 2023 at 4:00 PM to Monday, November 27 2023 at 5:00 PM -
Music Club Meeting @ Gardner Campus

Tuesday, November 28 2023 at 12:25 PM to Tuesday, November 28 2023 at 1:25 PM -
Cru Student Fellowship @ Gardner Campus | H385

Tuesday, November 28 2023 at 3:00 PM to Tuesday, November 28 2023 at 4:00 PM -
Coggshall Park Hike @ Coggshall Park | 159 Electric Ave, Fitchburg

Wednesday, November 29 2023 at 12:30 PM to Wednesday, November 29 2023 at 1:30 PM -
Criminalization of Drug Addiction @ South Cafe

Wednesday, November 29 2023 at 12:45 PM to Wednesday, November 29 2023 at 1:45 PM -
Weekly Art Club Meeting @ Room 104 (Studio One)

Wednesday, November 29 2023 at 4:00 PM to Wednesday, November 29 2023 at 5:00 PM -
Music Club Meeting @ Gardner Campus

Thursday, November 30 2023 at 5:00 AM to Thursday, November 30 2023 at 9:00 PM -
Open Gym Day @ Mount Fitness

Monday, December 4 2023 at 8:00 AM to Monday, December 4 2023 at 9:00 AM -
Yoga @ Mount Fitness

Monday, December 4 2023 at 12:30 PM to Monday, December 4 2023 at 1:30 PM -
CATS Programming Group Meeting @ W110

Monday, December 4 2023 at 12:30 PM to Monday, December 4 2023 at 1:30 PM -
Israel & Palestine Discussion @ Zoom

Monday, December 4 2023 at 4:00 PM to Monday, December 4 2023 at 5:00 PM -
SGA Biweekly Meeting @ Zoom

Monday, December 4 2023 at 4:00 PM to Monday, December 4 2023 at 5:00 PM -
Music Club Meeting @ Gardner Campus

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