

Amid bigger classes, fewer teachers, great year forecast

By **Kejia Tang**

"It's going to be a great year," says Principal/Supt. Mark Piechota, "with excellent students, and high-quality teachers and staff who will work together and make the best of what we have."

With the new year comes a host of changes to every aspect of Mount Greylock: class sizes, programs offered, new teachers, new administrative structure, and even a new school within our midst!

With pressing budget woes, class sizes have increased dramatically for the middle school to around 28 students per class. High-school classes have increased slightly to a range of 15-28 students per class with around an average of 23 per class. Programs such as technical drawing, and science labs have definitely been cut, and Mount Greylock's 38-year-old orchestra, one of the best in Berkshire County, is on the brink of extinction.

With the new administrative structure, Dr. Piechota has taken duties of both principal and superintendent. Timothy Payne is still an assistant principal, but focused on grades 10-12. And Ellen Kaiser has been elevated from teaching to assistant principal focused on grades 7-9. Lynda Araoz, new to Mount Greylock, is director of student services.

The "Charter School Residency" is also something new to Mount Greylock. As Dr. Piechota says, the charter school will be "our guest" although their impact may be smaller than many people have imagined.

They do not eat lunch in the cafeteria, their classes run from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., and their classrooms are all clustered near the middle school corridor (they have five classrooms at the corner of the north and west corridors and a small administrative area in the guidance office) so it is unlikely that Mount Greylock students will even see the charter students during the school day.



Mark Piechota, in his office, now both superintendent and principal

Also, according to Dr. Piechota, the charter school may be with Mount Greylock for only two months as they will move to their permanent residence in Adams once the facilities are completed. The rent from the

charter school, however, has helped Mount Greylock restore some programs and teaching positions.

"The administration, faculty, and staff are energized to make this a good year for students," says Dr. Piechota, "so welcome back!"

BArT at MGRHS: The school within a school

By **Rachel Payne**

Occupying just a handful of classrooms at the junction of the North and West corridors, the Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter School (BArT) now resides within Mount Greylock.

The moving-in process was surprisingly smooth. Interaction between BArT's students and middleschoolers has been minimal, and from the high-school hallways the new presence is totally imperceptible.

In general, Mount Greylock and the charter school coexist in peaceable segregation, in order to provide two significantly different educations. Julia Bowen and Ellen Ennis serve as a link between the two schools.

As is commonly known, Ms. Bowen and Mrs. Ennis previously taught at Mount Greylock. Though formerly a math teacher, Ms. Bowen now serves as executive director to the charter school.

She could not have foreseen that BArT would temporarily exist on the Greylock campus when she was selected for the position in 2003, yet she describes her return as feeling "like coming home."

Ms. Bowen spoke of tremendous enthusiasm for Mount Greylock, but recognized the opportunity presented by the charter school's small numbers. She seized the chance to "fit the schedule to the curriculum," as she says, "not the curriculum to the schedule."

Mrs. Ennis served Mount Greylock for 17 years, during which time she integrated the idea of subject-area portfolios into the middle school curriculum.

As an English teacher, she worked with students from grades 7-11. Her new employment requires an even broader field of teaching -- humanities. She now instructs charter-school students in history, English, and art.

As in all BArT classes, humanities will incorporate technology and the arts in innovative ways. The Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter School distinguishes itself from traditional public schools in ways beyond the emphasis on arts and technology mentioned in its name.

The students are assessed with a system of standards similar to those received in elementary school, instead of letter grades. Mrs. Ennis stressed that BArT will be subject to standardized testing like any other school. However, progress towards their mission state-

ment of developing "independent thinkers, dynamic workers, and active citizens" is forcefully inserted into the curriculum. Also, the BArT school day follows an entirely different schedule, not governed by the shrill ringing of bells. Doors open at 8:00 for breakfast and morning meeting, but core learning does not begin until 9:00. This leisurely start means students are not dismissed until 4:30.

Ms. Bowen views a charter school as an opportunity not only for its few students, but for the entire public-school system. In her eyes, they allow experimentation with new, unconventional educational methods, and reports of both successes and failures may decide the direction of public academics as a whole. The development of BArT students within this modern system, with its attention to individual learners, could greatly impact the future of Mount Greylock.

Oct. 2 workday, opens fall PTO plans

For the second year in a row, students, parents, faculty, staff and community members will come together for a one-time "work day" at the Mount Greylock campus on Saturday, Oct. 2 from 7:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m., the Mount Greylock Parent-Teacher Organization announced.

The PTO, which formed last year and has its first set of officers, is also inaugurating a "Harvest Dance" which will be held on Saturday Oct. 30. The PTO is looking for volunteers for both events. Last year some 300 people took part in the work day, which painted the cafeteria and many doors, planted flow-

ers, and gave the school a general spiffing up.

To volunteer for the workday, contact Lisa Hiley (458-3077 / lisahiley@adelphia.net) or Anne Hogeland (458-5966 / hogeland@adelphia.net). To help with the Harvest Dance, talk to Beth Goodman (ecg@waregoodmanlaw.com) or Denise Spencer (dspencer@eziba.com). The Harvest Dance night will include an auction of professional services, so Spencer and Goodman are also seeking donations for that auction.

The next PTO meeting is Oct. 4, at 7 p.m. in the school library.

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Join the Echo:

Recruitment meeting

Tues. Sept. 21, 2:30 p.m.

NEWS faculty profiles, Part 1

Two MGRHS grads return to teaching; Quan, Red Sox interests



English: Emery Gagnon



Math: Jenna Cece



Latin: Janean Laidlaw



Spanish: Kaity Elias

EDITORS' NOTE -- Mount Greylock has eight new teachers this year. In this issue we invite you to learn about about four of them - our new English, Latin, Spanish and Math teachers. We'll profile the rest, next month.

By Lucy White

Mr. Emery Gagnon ("Mr.G"), loves to talk, loves to listen, and loves to teach. He went to high school at Wahconah, in Dalton. He received a B.A. from Elmira College and is about to receive his M.A. from Lehman College in New York City.

Before Mount Greylock, Mr. Gagnon was teaching in the Bronx in an open-campus school with 35 kids to a class. Students left the school for lunch, and the unofficial attitude was that if they didn't come back after lunch, it was better because it kept class sizes down. If students wanted to fight, they left school grounds, where they were the police's issue.

Mr. Gagnon says that he hasn't been at Mount Greylock long enough to get a good feeling for the place, but it is very different from the city.

He enjoys both the city and the country, and thinks that the Berkshire mountains are lovely.

Mr. G. teaches three classes of English 9, and one each of English 10 and English 11. Ideally he would like to teach the book Dune by Frank Herbert as part of the curriculum.

When asked what his favorite movie was, he replied that he couldn't choose one, so here is his top 10 list in no particular order:

"Chasing Amy," "Ghost in the Shell," "The Godfather," "Good Will Hunting," "pie (the symbol)," "Run Lola Run," "Empire Strikes Back," "Waking Life," "Not Another Teen Movie," and "Iron Monkey."

Mr. Gagnon uses a stuffed moose toy for a pass, he likes legends and things supernatural, and his room is filled with movie posters and voodoo masks.

He is funny, down-to-earth, and he will tell you the best stories if you stop by his room, 56.

Ms. Jenna Cece is also from this area. She grew up in Williamstown and went to Mount Greylock, where she graduated in 1998. Ms. Cece then went to Lafayette College in Penn-

sylvania where she majored in math, which she is teaching now. She choose to teach because she would rather use math in teaching than in a financial field. After college she taught for a year at a small private school called Moravian Academy in PA. Last year, she moved closer to home, teaching at Monument Mountain High School in Great Barrington.

Ms. Cece likes returning to MGRHS and having "the familiarity of the building and some of the staff."

Her favorite movies are "Notting Hill," and "Sweet Home Alabama." Both are chick flicks, which she says she likes. She enjoys the books The DaVinci Code which she read recently, and She's Come Undone, which she read in high school.

Apart from school, Ms. Cece coaches girls soccer, figure skates, runs, and plays golf. Her role model is her grandmother, and she loves Maya Angelou, especially her poetry.

Mrs. Janean Laidlaw, Mount Greylock's new Latin teacher, is also familiar with the building. For the past few years she has been a substitute teacher at Mt. Greylock. Before

MGRHS Mrs. Laidlaw taught at the Dwight School and the Birch-Wathen School, both in New York City. She grew up on a farm and went to high school in Richmond Indiana, then to Carleton College in Minnesota where she majored in French and was class valedictorian.

Her first impressions of Mount Greylock were, "Wow, this is so much better than where I came from." Mrs. Laidlaw teaches because she is "fascinated by how people's mind's work."

The Kitchen God's Wife by Amy Tan and *What's Bred in the Bone* by Robertson Davies are her favorite books. "Gone With the Wind" is her favorite movie.

Her hobbies include writing, baking, and loving the Boston Red Sox. She believes that she "has the potential to be a crazy cat lady."

Mrs. Laidlaw knows her history. She looks up to Queen Elizabeth I because she was, "one heck of a lady." And in the controversial debate over Shakespere's real identity, Mrs. Laidlaw nominates Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford. Her personal quote is "Life is not a contest. On the other hand, it's not a tie either."

Ms. Kaity Elias attended Mount Greylock as well. She graduated in 2000, and went on to Union College where she majored in Spanish. After college, when she wasn't sure what to do, Mrs. Murray called her up this summer and told her about a middle-school Spanish teaching position opening up here.

This is her first teaching job, but the transition from college to teaching has been easier because she knows the building and the other staff members.

She thinks it is a little weird to be calling her former teachers by their first names.

Ms. Elias runs and figure skates in her spare time. Her favorite quote is something her coaches used to tell her, "Competition doesn't build character, it reveals it."

Her favorite movie is "The Sound of Music," and her favorite book is *Angles and Demons* by Dan Brown.

When she was a child she used to look up to Michelle Quan for inspiration.

She would like to tell her students to stick with language, because it allows them to learn about other cultures, and especially Spanish, because it is becoming more widely used.

School Committee offers 2004-2005 proposed goals including clear budget

The Mount Greylock School Committee has adopted many proposed goals for the upcoming new year, including:

1. Solidifying the administrative organization for 2005-2006 by searching for and appointing a new superintendent (Dr. Piechota is retiring at the end of the school year) and settling on an administrative structure.
2. Deciding whether a senior-project graduation requirement should be put into effect for all future students.
3. Planning building renovations by appointing a regional building committee, put together past data, and perhaps hiring an architect.
4. Forecasting possible educational implications of possible student enrollment changes.
5. Promoting and supporting the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation process.
6. Working earlier on the 2005-2006 fiscal year budget and changing the format the budget is presented to be clearer to the public and easier to make predictions about budget cut impacts.

TEAM ECHO

The Mount Greylock Echo is the student newspaper of Mount Greylock Regional High School in Williamstown, Mass. It is published once per month during the academic year. Each issue is developed and edited by a team of editors and writers. Any Mount Greylock student may join the staff, attend meetings and submit articles.

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A limited number of sponsor advertising positions are available in The Echo and help to defray publishing costs. For email, email echo@newshare.com

NEWS

Hearings begin on solution to loss of drinking water supply; new line plan

By Carl Kubler

By now, students take for granted the dozens of faded yellow "perchlorate warning" papers posted throughout the school. And while the bright blue water jugs students drink from provide a temporary solution to MGRHS's current water contamination, a proposed \$3-million water line along Cold Spring Road may soon solve the school's difficulties.

Perchlorate, a component of rocket fuel and fireworks, is found at levels of more than 9 parts per billion in the school's water – well over Massachusetts's 1 ppb warning threshold for sensitive populations, including young children and pregnant women. High levels of the chemical have been shown to impair thyroid gland function.

Northern Berkshire Health Systems (Sweetwood), the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, and MGRHS would share the new water line. Public hearings on the proposed new water line began this week in Williamstown town hall.

Some community members have expressed concerns that the project will spur development along Cold Spring Road, drawing it away from the center of town.



JavaJive defers to football, postpones coffee house to October

The first JavaJive Coffee House at the First Congregational Church in Williamstown is being deferred out of deference to football.

"Because the first Mt. Greylock home football game is scheduled for this Friday night, we are canceling this week's JavaJive," steering committee parent member Deborah Burns said in a email sent on Sunday. "Look for coffeehouses to resume in October."

Performers interested in booking mic time should contact Mollie Berman at the following email address: <The_Red_Rose_House@sailormoon.com>.

Admission is \$5 for adults, \$3 for students and \$1 for performers. A portion of the proceeds goes to the Greylock Assistance Project fund (GAAP).

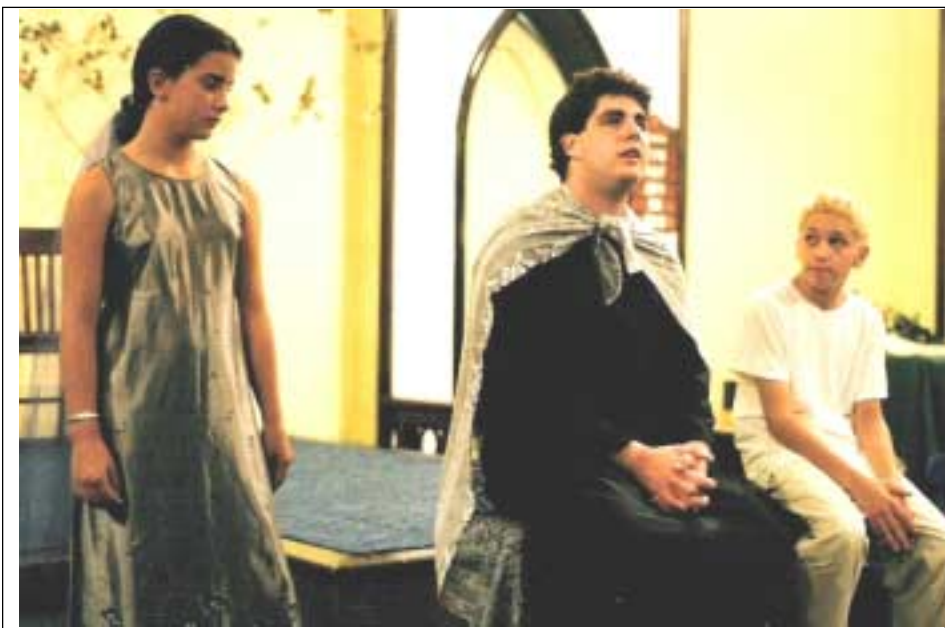
Performers in the past who have signed up have run the gamut from singer-songwriters, to a classical guitar virtuosa, comedians, a poet, a rock band and a Yo Yo wizard.

The night generally includes sale of cookies and brownies.

Begun last year, the coffee house has been popular with MGRHS students, and one of last year's sessions included a tribute to the late Mathias Bartels.

MGRHS students write original musical

CD of "The Pixie's Light" by Matsui preserves original score



At left, three cast members of "The Pixie's Light" in rehearsal during August. At right, playwright Maki Matsui (left) and lead thespian Linnea Johnson. The play raised \$200 for the Mount Greylock GAP fund.

By Katie White

The Pixie's Light, a summer musical written, directed, and acted by Mount Greylock students, was a theatrical success this summer! Raising over \$200 for the GAP Fund and over \$100 for the United Methodist Church in Williamstown, *The Pixie's Light's* final result was well-worth the effort, performers said.

Work on the musical began in the spring of '04 when Maki Matsui, now a junior at Mt. Greylock, began writing the script -- just a few months after the production of her last musical, *Andelion*. Compared to *Andelion*, however (the story of a human girl who befriends the goddess Diana), *The Pixie's Light* was four times the length and included two times the amount of songs.

Despite early setbacks, the first performance on Saturday, Aug. 28 and the matinee performance the next day both went smoothly with many supportive Mount Greylock students, faculty, staff, and community members in attendance.

Between performances, the cast of *The Pixie's Light* recorded onto a CD the songs (as well as a bonus sung by Eli Phillips) from the musical written by a talented group of (mostly student) composers.

Between performances, the cast of *The Pixie's Light* recorded onto a CD the songs (as well as a bonus sung by Eli Phillips) from the musical written by a talented group of (mostly student) composers: Sarah Hirsch (also the musical Director), Yo Matsui, Maki Matsui, Susan Matsui, and Kejia Tang. Copies are \$5 and all proceeds benefit the GAP Fund.

Ask Katie White if you would like to purchase one.

The story revolves around a star named Star Elf (played by Linnea Johnson) who is ashamed because she can't shine as brightly as the other stars. She decides to visit Kassi the Wizard (Kejia Tang) to ask for advice, but when he proves unhelpful, she steals the Pixie's magical light -- a torch representing peace between two tribes of the Light Nymphs and Shadow Elves. When two troublesome winds (self-styled "tricksters"), Westerlie and Southerlie (Rufus Paisley and Christina Johnson), accidentally blow out the torch, the tribes begin fighting and it is up to Star Elf to relight the torch and bring peace back to the forest.

Due to the larger production scale of *The Pixie's Light* and with the same time frame to work in (two months), the summer seemed more of a scramble to pull loose ends together than an organized process. The cast members had a difficult time making frequent rehearsals every Tuesday and Saturday afternoon due to camps, family vacations, and other plays.

\$28K raised? But Fohrhaltz awaits re-hire

Orchestra students at Mount Greylock were awaiting this week the return of music teacher Ouisa Fohrhaltz.

A group of parents, lead by by Williamstown residents Stephen Sheppard, Paul Rosenthal and Irwin Shainman, had raised sufficient funds last week to persuade the school committee to vote unanimous to rehire Fohrhaltz for a four-tenths-time position (down from seven-tenths last year).

But as of Tuesday, Fohrhaltz said she had yet to receive a formal hiring offer or contract, which she said the faculty union advised her is required.

An estimated \$28,000 is said to have been raised for the position, which was cut from the budget.

Senior class awards listed completed

EDITORS' NOTE -- The final June, 2004 edition of The Echo omitted, for space reasons, some of the senior-class awards. They are printed below.

Katherine Grace Noonan
Citizens Scholarship Foundation of
Lanesborough and New Ashford
Mildred Uyrus Scholarship

Kevin James O'Connor
Friends of the Arts Certificate
National Honor Society
Bernard R. "Bucky" Bullett
Scholarship
Sarah Sabin Memorial Scholarship
Williamstown Lions Club Scholarship
Mt. Greylock Business Technology
Award

Zachary S. Ogden
National Honor Society
Citizens Scholarship Foundation of
Lanesborough and New Ashford
Class of 2003 Scholarship

Melissa Marie Ouellette
Irene Mannheim Memorial Award
A World of Difference Certificate
Citizens Scholarship Foundation of
Lanesborough and New Ashford

Rachel Allison Parzick
Adams Cooperative Bank Scholarship
Citizens Scholarship Foundation of
Lanesborough and New Ashford

Eli Stephen Phillips
Friends of the Arts Certificate
National Honor Society
A World of Difference Certificate

Maria B. and Alton L. Perry
Memorial Scholarship for the
Performing Arts
Pauline Smith Memorial Scholarship

Nicole Marie Poulin
The Danforth Award
National Honor Society
President's Education Award Program
- Educational Excellence
E. Herbert Botsford Scholarship
Pauline Smith Memorial Scholarship

Justin Quinn
President's Education Award Program
- Educational Improvement
Volunteer Service Learning Certificate
A World of Difference Certificate
E. Herbert Botsford Scholarship
Edward T. Flynn Memorial
Community Service Award

Lauren Quinn
Drama Award - Technical
Friends of the Arts Certificate
National Honor Society
Volunteer Service Learning Certificate
Lilian D. Fitzsimmons Scholarship
Meredith Shine Memorial Soccer
Award
Williamstown Rotary Club Scholarship

Matthew Resio
President's Education Award Program
- Educational Improvement
E. Herbert Botsford Scholarship
Francis V. Grant Memorial
Scholarship
Williamstown Education Association
Award
Williamstown Community Scholarship
Fund Award

Renée Lynn Rougeau
Citizens Scholarship Foundation of
Lanesborough and New Ashford
Beverly Wall Scholarship

Angela Marie Scerbo
A World of Difference Certificate

Andrew Shotwell
Volunteer Service Learning
Certificate
Abraham and Bertha Sabin Memorial
Scholarship

Daniel Anthony Smeglin
Massachusetts Foreign Language
Association Board of Directors
Award
* Spanish
National Honor Society
President's Education Award
Program - Educational Excellence
Volunteer Service Learning
Certificate
E. Herbert Botsford Scholarship
Pauline Smith Memorial Scholarship

Aaron Lowell Souza
Gerard N. Davis Latin Award
Friends of the Arts Certificate
Massachusetts Foreign Language
Association Board of Directors
Award
* Latin
National Honor Society
National Merit Scholarship Winner
President's Education Award
Program - Educational Excellence
John D. Gill, Jr. Science Award
Mt. Greylock Regional High School
Education Association Award for

Academic Excellence
John B. Clark Scholar Award

Ross Henry Thurston
Friends of the Arts Certificate

Bartholomeus Adrianus vanLuling, Jr.
National Honor Society
John Falvey Memorial Scholarship
Lawrence Shaw Memorial Scholarship
Williamstown Lions Club Scholarship
Mt. Greylock Wellness Award

Joshua Alex Weiner
National Honor Society
Nellie Cameron Scholarship
Hancock Community Scholarship Fund
Hancock School Faculty Scholarship

Charlotte Veronica White
Friends of the Arts Certificate
National Honor Society
John W. McGowen Creative Writing
Award
Class of 1950 Foreign language Prize

Shelli Witek
Citizens Scholarship Foundation of
Lanesborough and New Ashford

Lydia Marie Wood
National Honor Society

Mary Katherine Wootters
Friends of the Arts Certificate
Aline S. Geigerman Purchase Prize in
Art

Matthew Drummond
Allen E. Danaher Memorial
Scholarship

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POETRY CORNER

Reflections

By Kejia Tang

I throw down my pen
cling, clank
It bounces and rolls
like that little kid
doing his first cartwheel
on the front of my parents' lawn.

Years later
that same little kid
is raking leaves
swoosh, swash
The endless pieces of orange-red
origami

floating in shapes of frogs and
swans
drift from branches high above
him.

I look at him from my window.
He sees me,
sticks out his tongue in challenge.
I smile back
and pick up my pen again.

The Echo welcomes contributions of poetry. Email submissions to echo@newshare.com

Auditions held for senior's original musical production

More than 30 students, and a few community members, turned out this week on the first day of auditions for a student-written musical which will be staged Dec. 16-18.

Senior Sarah Hirsch has written "The Queen & The Orphan," for a flexible cast which includes at least 20 speaking roles, including singers, dancers and comedians. Students and community members are needed for help with set design and production, costumes, publicity, stage management, props and makeup, and

approximately \$500 must be raised as well. Williams College's theater department has offered props and other assistance, said Jane Sharaf, a retired music educator and vocalist who is acting as "mentor" to Hirsch and the cast. Auditions were held this week for an original musical production which senior Sarah Hirsch is writing for presentation Dec. 16-18 at Mount Greylock.

To volunteer or contribute, call Sharaf at 458-4744 or Hirsch at 458-0369.

The Greylock Echo

Join The Echo Staff

Recruitment Meeting

Tues., Sept. 21
2:30 p.m.
Echo office
(back of library)

We need: By working with The Echo Team:

- Graphics designer
- Advertising Manager
- Club Correspondents
- Photographers
- Columnists
- Reporters
- Copy Editors
- Help make the school a better place
- Spend time with committed colleagues
- Practice clear, simple, fast writing
- Learn how to interview and obtain information
- Find out about all aspects of the school
- Be eligible for field trips, meetings, and talks