

TIME TO REBOOT?

Age, maintenance mar computers; but \$23K will add web software

By Flora Lim

Mount Greylock's information technology is in need of a reboot – and when it comes to software, it will be getting it as a result of a \$23,000 gift from Williams College. But hardware is another story.

Many computers at the school library are currently out of order. The printer in the computer lab does not work and the process of fixing them tends to be slow for there is only one person, Jason Bennett, who takes care of all the computers in the entire school.

"Our school computers are becoming frustrating to work with," says school librarian Kathy Share. "They are very old, the network needs to be updated, and they are slow and get very crowded so we cannot set some useful programs in them. They also breakdown easily."

To solve the problem, the school will perform a more temporary solution. Bennett, the school technology specialist, says that

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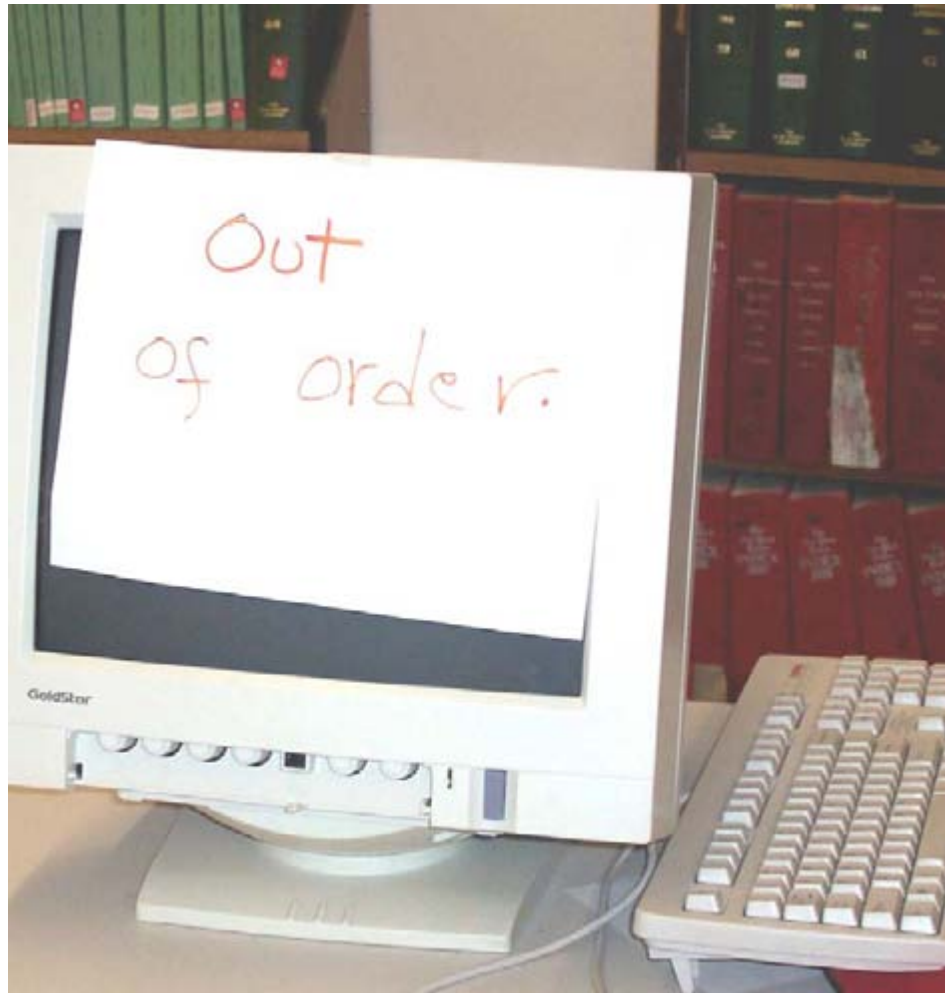


photo by Rosana Zarza

One of many disabled computers in entrance of the library

Seniors make it through projects

Curaco sees 'paradigm shift' for MG's future

By Justin Fox

One-hundred and thirteen Mount Greylock seniors have taken the senior-project "test" -- and it looks like all have passed. This week, they presented their hard work orally -- to community judges.

The audience consisted of a member of the junior class, two teachers, and a community member. The presentations were 6-12 minutes long and include a visual. Seniors were told to dress properly and that a failure to do so would result in a failing score. With the presentations done, seniors still need to write a reflection on the entire senior-project experience and how it was a learning stretch. Also, they need to fill out a self-oral presentation evaluation and make sure they have a completed portfolio.

On April 4, while students enjoyed the day off, the teachers of Mt. Greylock evaluated the senior-project papers. Numerous groups of four or five discussed and graded the papers according to a standardized rubric. The teachers didn't know whose paper they were grading since instead of a name, students had to put an assigned number on their paper. "I believe the teacher evaluations were useful and I'm happy that they kept a high level of expectations," staid senior-project coordinator Michael Caraco.

The Wednesday following jumbled up the senior class when students began to receive their portfolios back with a graded rubric. Seniors met individually with teachers Michael Caraco and Thomas Osteimer, or Supt. Mark Piechota to discuss their pa-

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'05-'06 budget adds teacher position, labs; three teams coming back in 7-8

By The Echo Staff

(Related story, below)

A 12-percent projected enrollment decline over two years is making it possible to restore 20-student class sizes and a three-team teaching approach in the Mount Greylock middle school for the fall, Supt. Mark Piechota said this week. In addition, there will be 60.9 teaching positions in the fall -- up from 59.9 this year.

In 2004-2005 academic year, seventh and eighth graders endured larger classes and only two teams. This was the result of a loss of teaching positions from 2003-2004. The faculty union executed a memorandum

agreement which allowed the larger classes for one year. Next year, said Piechota, the Mount Greylock Educators Association is unwilling to extend the memorandum affecting grades 7 and 8.

But Piechota said the enrollment decline made it possible to shift one or two teaching positions from 9-12 grades down to the middle school. -- and still plan to restore science labs in the fall. In addition, the \$8.9 million budget for 2005-2006 actually restores one teaching position from those lost, and represents a 6.6% increase in spending over 2004-2005.

"That middle-school program is going

to be an excellent one with teachers having small enough classes and class loads so they can really respond to students," Piechota said.

The enrollment decline is a result of several factors, said Piechota, including:

-- A continuing cyclical decline in the size of graduating classes from feeder elementary schools.

-- A shift in the demographics of Williamstown to homes with fewer children.

-- More students (about 10/year) choosing to attend McCann Tech

-- A few students attending the Adams-based charter school.

Hope for teacher contract remains; salaries, health share are key issues

By Shan Wang

After 15 months of negotiations, the Mount Greylock Regional School Committee and the Mount Greylock Educators Association (MGEA) are still hoping to reach an agreement on teachers' contracts. Teachers want contracts finalized before the end of May so the faculty can vote upon the proposal before the end of the school year. If no settlement is reached in time, teachers will begin another school year without a union contract.

Rose-Marie Pelletier, president of MGEA, is not overly hopeful that an agreement will be reached soon, as past negotiation sessions have been disappointments. "We had a session scheduled for a full day during April vacation, but it turned out to be only a half-day session. We went into [the session] hopeful, but the meeting did not produce results." Pelletier says teachers have recently submitted three new proposals, which the school committee will review. Both sides have been asked by the nego-



photo by Rosana Zarza

Rose Marie Pelletier

tiations mediator not to reveal the proposals to the public.

"The school committee is more than will-

ing to meet all through the summer. We are ready to meet anytime, anywhere," said Tim O'Brien, a school-board member. "But the Teachers Association won't meet after school." O'Brien, who has been in on all 15 months of negotiations, emphasized that the committee is concerned about students' well being. "The committee hopes we can resolve this issue and come up with an agreement that is in the best interest of the students at Mount Greylock."

Robert Petricca, chairman of the committee, was unavailable for comment.

Teachers are currently working on last year's expired contract. "The committee is trying to schedule several more sessions before school closes," said O'Brien. If no contract is finalized this year, Pelletier said the old contract from last October would roll over.

On Tuesday night, Williamstown voters acting at annual Town Meeting ap-

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A farewell to business manager Marti Mellorp.3

Orchestra connect with BSO.....p.4

OPINION

A memoir of Italy: "Hello-Alo... wakey, wakey..."

By Shannon Young

Each year Mount Greylock students are offered an opportunity to experience other culture firsthand by traveling to a foreign country with the help of CHA (Cultural Heritage Alliance) tours, and the well traveled, Mr. and Mrs. Murray. Eleven Mount Greylock students (including myself), and the Murrays departed from John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York City on April 16 for Italy. After the eight-hour flight, which, may I add, seemed longer because of the anticipation; our group met our tour director, Tony and his trusty-sidekick, the bus driver, Nino. We could tell from the start of the trip, that it would be a fun experience that we would always remember.

While Tony was a tall, big man with a hearty Italian accent when he spoke English, Nino was short, small and only knew a few phrases in English. On the first day of the trip they gave us a small bus tour of Rome or Roma as the Italians call it.

That evening the Murrays lead our group in a walking tour to Piazza Navona, while telling us about the culture and the gypsies that overwhelm the city. The next morning Tony and Nino decided to do something "Gangster" (Tony's words not mine) by driving the tour bus up to the Vatican Museum (which is not permitted) to save us a fifteen-minute walk, uphill.

After spending a few hours in Vatican City we headed over to the Colosseum, and Forum for guided tours. After our



The Italian travelers, on site.

tours we were given a night to explore Rome. The Murrays took us to the Spanish steps and another piazza, where we split ways from them, and all of us students walked back to the Vatican (about half an hour away). By the time we reached St. Peter's square we had divided into smaller groups and explored the Basilica and Pope John Paul's tomb. We sat on "Smoke Watch" for an hour or two and then it finally came out, white-at first, then slowly it changed to black. It was a disappointment, but exciting none the less.

The walk back to our hotel was an

experience, and whether we were lost or not really depends upon whom you talk to, but we got back none the less after about an hour and a half of walking. When everyone from our group returned to the hotel the Murrays took us to the Trevi fountain, where we spent our last night in Rome.

The next few days, were divided mostly between Sorrento, Pompeii, the island of Capri, and factories boasted products each region was famous for. These days weren't as jam packed as our first few days in Rome, but they were wonderful

nonetheless. On April 21, our tour bus left the Bay of Naples area and we set out on an eleven-hour bus ride to the Capital of Tuscany, Firenze (Florence).

Though we tried to sleep on the ride, every few hours or so we'd be awoken to Tony's voice over the intercom saying "Hello-Alo... wakey, wakey..." which is not something that anybody wanted to wake up to. It was also during that long bus ride that Nino yelled at a man for eating a sandwich on the bus, by picking a piece of cheese that the man had dropped and yelling, "You like furmaggio (cheese)?"

Florence was beautiful, which Tony pointed out to us from the "Panoramic view" which overlooked the city, and especially from the top of the Duomo (a large church dome), which, to reach the top, included the climbing of some five hundred, steep, uneven stairs. Venice was a curious, but wonderful place. The alleys were narrow and the crowds were large, but the culture is rich and vibrant. The Grand Canal is so beautiful, and gondola rides were a once in a lifetime experience that I'm sure none of us will be sure to forget.

Leaving Italy was heartbreaking, but the memories and experiences are something that the other students, the Murrays and I, will keep with us forever. Not only did we experience Italian culture in different regions up close, but also we formed friendships, and witnessed some of the most breathtaking monuments to history that Europe has to offer.

A fresh recipee for improving Mt. Greylock -- just stay here!

By Faith Shuker-Haines

A recent one of the far-too-common *Echo* articles about the current budget situation stated that the number of students at the school will most likely be substantially decreasing between this year and next, implying that more people are likely to leave Mount Greylock for private school.

This makes me very sad, and a little angry. Because a school is made of the people who attend it. Whether or not we have the money for new football uniforms

is not as important as whether we have students to wear them. I believe that the worst effect of the budget cuts is not the old textbooks we have to use, or the slightly larger class sizes, but the people that leave Greylock because of them.

If we all stayed here and worked to make this school a better place, it will be, but if we just leave for a different school, Mount Greylock will only get worse.

People who think Greylock isn't good enough have probably never been to another public school.

We have intelligent teachers who care about their students, classes offered in enough subjects to fill that massive packet we all got a month ago, and a group of friendly and interesting students. Just because you think one class is boring, or one person is mean to you, does not counteract all the nice kids and funny teachers who do choose to go to Mount Greylock.

We have great sports teams and above-average test scores. We have groups that support the community and we put on

great plays.

But if all the talented people who make these things possible leave the school for "better opportunities," it will only perpetuate the cycle.

Please, if you consider leaving Mount Greylock because you fear budget cuts, realize that a school's worth is not made up of how much money we have, but how many people we have that will make the school proud. Don't walk out on your school because it is getting "worse" — stay around and make it better.

Is saving the gym floor worth killing off junior prom?

By Greg Burton

"Junior Prom is Saturday, May 14 Tickets are available at lunch." So said Jan Livernois on the loudspeaker morning after morning. Yet no one, or hardly anyone, bought tickets, leaving the dance in a state of uncertainty, or as Mrs. Livernois put it, "postponed indefinitely."

Why was the dance such a failure? There were a number of contributing factors, but perhaps the largest was the decided location of the doomed event. The change of location from the gym to the cafeteria was certainly a turn-off for most, if not all the juniors who had ever considered attending. Why this change? It was decided that the gym floor could not possibly, under any circumstances, sustain wear from the feet of the dancing. More specifically, it was felt that girls' shoes would inflict untold damage to the floor. However, this position seems somewhat misinformed considering that many, if not all, of those who wear shoes that would scratch or scuff the floor take them off upon arriving at the event. Many students agree with this view, feeling that there was little or no reason

for concern over the condition of the gym floor. In the past, the floor has not been left in a state of grisly disrepair following dances. It certainly was not a shambles after Homecoming. What has changed since then to remove the gym from consideration as a venue for dances? What would warrant the movement of the event, an act that has worked to diminish interest to the point of causing its postponement, and perhaps its cancellation, which would undoubtedly place undue financial strain on the Junior Class?

To be fair, the floor has undoubtedly experienced some wear and tear as the result of dances, but does it not experience similar, if not worse, wear when people play pickleball, soccer, or volleyball, or when, ironically, they dance in gym class? And is that wear not compounded over several periods every day, five days a week? In the grand scheme of things, an occasional dance is not going to do much harm in comparison to the constant abuse that the gym floor typically takes. So why would the dance be placed in jeopardy, leaving many in the lurch and perhaps raising high class dues still further? The only logical solution is for the Junior Prom to be held in the gym, where it should have been in the first place.

The author is a MGRHS junior.

Chill out -- Is the Cumby's slushy the latest fast-food fad?

By David Rosenthal

It seems that overnight Cumberland Farm's newest product, the Cumby's Chill Zone slushy, has become the hottest thing for local Williamstown teens.

Having recently introduced the new iced beverage, with flavors similar to those of Slush Puppies, the MG tennis team has already made the product its official drink. Now tennis practice just is not right without one.

Cumby's Chill Zone's popularity remains a mystery, the writer says.

Sam Beattie of the ninth grade said it; "Cumby's Chill Zones are the best invention since sliced bread." In a tenth grade Latin class, much to the teacher's dismay, all of the students went into frenzy at the mention of the slushies. "My favorite flavor's green apple," one boy exclaimed. "No! You gotta go with frozen cherry mixed with blue raspberry," another argued.

To many critics, Cumby's Chill Zone's popularity remains a mystery; however, the reason for the beverage's sudden success is probably its price. "They taste

good when you first try them, but they taste great when you see that they're only sixty nine cents" said ninth grader Sofie Brooks. That's right! With only sixty-nine cents plus three cents tax, you can get a small (twenty two ounces) or large (thirty two ounces) cup of what some would call pure, icy heaven. Since these drinks are comprised mostly of ground ice, Cumberland Farms can easily afford to sell these slushies at such a low price, two to three dollars less than similar products would be sold at super stores, malls or movie theaters. Because of Cumberland Farm's new drinks' cheapness and subsequent popularity, the local store/gas station has been enjoying better business than ever before. One cashier there, John, said that he estimates that 60% of all current Williamstown Cumby's customers end up buying a slushy. On some days, that means, the slushies, alone, might bring in over five hundred dollars to the store. But don't be tricked into buying these gigantic drinks just because they are dilute and cheap; one slushy, 22 or 32 ounces, will give you way more sugar than an average bottle of soda (anyone whose experienced the sugar low following the consumption of a Cool Zone can attest to that). Nevertheless, Cumby's Cool Zones present a refreshing, popular and cheaper alternative to soda.

NEWS

coming and going, Part II

Travis agenda includes 'extended' review, building and water systems, enrollment decline

By Lucy White

Mount Greylock's new superintendent has recently been hired, but is the student body aware of his policies?

Dr. William Travis, the current Pittsfield school superintendent, will replace Dr. Mark Piechota this summer. Before working as a school administrator in Pittsfield, Dr. Travis taught history. He went to elementary school in Brooklyn, N.Y., and high school in Port Washington, Long Island. He is a graduate of Colgate University and has a Ph.D. from Boston University.

In a *Greylock Echo* interview, Travis makes it clear he understands big changes are needed at Mt. Greylock, and he has a positive outlook for the school's future.

Dr. Travis has been frequently visiting Mount Greylock during the school day, and has been attending some school committee meetings since he was hired in January. He views Mt. Greylock's strengths as its faculty and its students, and feels that the atmosphere of the halls, created by the students, is one of friendly, helpful, and considerate young adults.

When asked about how he views the senior project, Dr. Travis was optimistic. He understands that there were problems this year, but thinks they are first-year glitches and if students are thinking about the project from a younger age, they will be more engaged. He sees the project as a great opportunity for students to interact with adults, and create a tremendous contribution to the community as a culminating experience at Mt. Greylock.

However, Dr. Travis is also aware of the problems that face Mt. Greylock, particularly low enrollment. The numbers have

dropped from nearly 800 students to a number much closer to 700 in just two years. He believes that a small school can be beneficial in some ways, but at a certain point it begins to be limiting when fewer classes are offered.

He is disappointed that so many families have left [MGRHS], and would like to find a way to bring them back. The numbers have dropped from nearly 800 students to a number much closer to 700 in just two years.

He is disappointed that so many families have left, and would like to find a way to bring them back. His other concerns are rumors he has heard about too many absences or tardies, particularly with seniors.

He thinks that the Student in Good Standing policy is fair, as he understands the teachers' frustrations with attendance and discipline. Dr. Travis remembers working hard on lesson plans, and being disrespected by having students not show up to take his class.

He says that Pittsfield is currently struggling with the same issue, and they are considering a new policy, which would only allow three absences in a ten-week period,

with tardies counting as a fraction of an absence.

If the student received a fourth absence, they would receive no credit in the class, which they skipped for that marking period. The student could gain back their grades with detention, and the system works on a class-by-class basis.

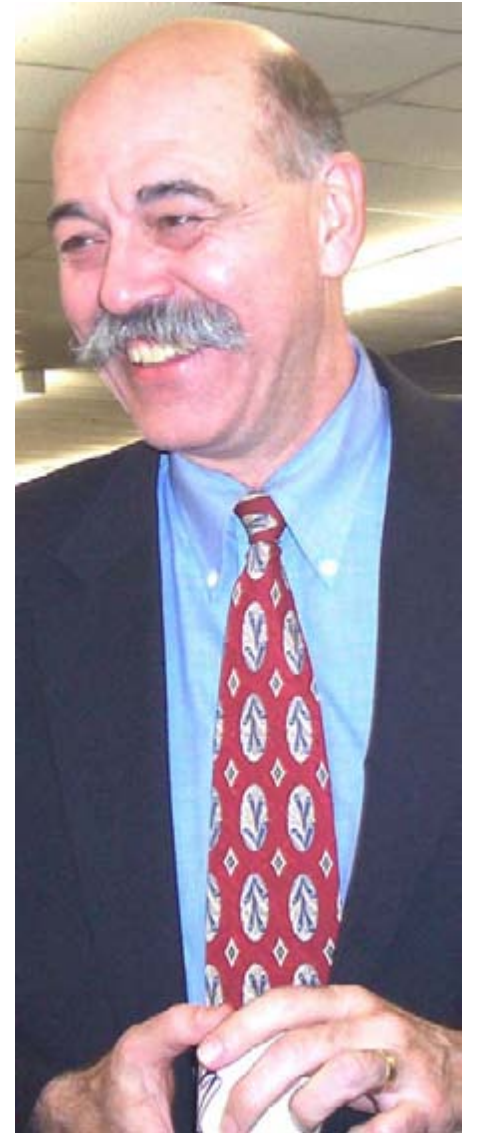
Dr. Travis says that he respects a 17- or 18-year-old's rights, but thinks that some limits need to be created.

He has no specific intention of installing the Pittsfield policy here. Revising the system is becoming more important statewide because the MCAS is soon going to require that a school's total attendance record is at least 95%, or it can fail.

The extended policy could be changed under Dr. Travis as well. The school currently uses extended minutes to count towards the state-required number of teaching minutes, but he questions how much learning is really being accomplished during this block of time.

Another issue that Dr. Travis will have to address is the run-down state of the school building itself. Mt. Greylock is currently looking at serious renovations to the building, or complete reconstruction. A study by Williams College students confirms that the conditions of the current structure are not space-efficient, heat-efficient, or health conscious.

The school also has a water problem that must be fixed. Luckily, Dr. Travis is capable of helping the situation. While at Pittsfield, he has assisted in finding funding for major construction at seven schools in his district. He fixed five elementary schools and two middle schools, adding libraries; with a



Travis at a parent forum in January.

total budget was \$58 million. The prospective costs of major renovation or reconstruction of Mt. Greylock are \$15-27 million.

REBOOT

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some of the old computers in rough shape will be replaced later this week so hopefully by next week the library will be functional.

If the replacement of old computers in the library is good news for students, the next news is a delightful one for teachers and parents: Starting next year, Mount Greylock is adapting a new administrative computer program called "PowerSchool." PowerSchool is a student-information system from Apple Computer Corp.

It manages student information from report cards to attendance, grades, schedules, an online daily bulletin and other data that will mainly be produced by teachers and staff. The software purchase was funded by a one-time grant from Williams.

"The equipments are already here and everything is set to go," says Bennett. "It's our hope that PowerSchool will be fully functional in the fall but the first year will be a challenge in terms of training, professional development, and teachers feeling comfortable with the new program. Some people might also struggle with the technology."

There also is an option to run WinSchool and PowerSchool together to make it easier to adjust to." He says that PowerSchool is much more user friendly than the current system and easier to keep track of things even from outside of the building.

Adapting a new program might seem like a hassle and might take a while to get used to, but in the long run it will be worth the effort.

The biggest change: While WinSchool could only be accessed cross the school's local network, the features of PowerSchool can be reached from a web browser anywhere inside or outside school – so long as the user has an authorizing user name and password.

For example, parents can log-on to check their child's grade and attendance as well as the students and teachers can find out where their students are during school. By using PowerSchool, the administrative system will run much smoother and teachers will not have to worry about bringing down attendance to the office everyday because the computer will do the work for them.

Teachers will receive some sort of training by different ways including on-line training, phone conference, and attending the PowerSchool University, and these will be options depending on the school budget.

Retiring at 55, Mellor says schools lose prestige from Romney-era budget woes; she may work in non-profit sector

EDITORS' NOTE -- The principal-superintendent office will see three departures in June -- the retirements of Joan Manners, Marty Mellor and Mark Piechota. Last month The Echo interviewed Manners; this month Mellor and the incoming superintendent. Next month, the paper hopes to talk to Piechota.

By Rachel Payne

Mount Greylock teachers and staff walk out every day at 2:45, and the high-school administration is leaving as well – permanently. Both Dr. Piechota and Mrs. Manners are leaving the district, and business manager Mrs. Mellor, having reached the age of 55, is planning her retirement.

Mellor has managed the school's finances since 1988. A former superintendent hired her during a painful, six-month auditing process. She left her post as business manager at Gateway Regional High School in Huntington, Mass., for a similar Mount Greylock with a sense of purpose: "The immediate goal was to get a sense of finances of the district and get some control back so the towns could understand the finances," said Mellor of her role during the financial crisis.

In the 16 years since Mellor first put the high school's finances in working order, the greatest challenges came with Gov. Mitt Romney's first state budget. Romney came into office in 2002. Faced with an economic decline, he cut Chapter 70 funding for schools by 20 percent. The blow was devastating, but school administrators had feared worse. "There'd been so much talk about losing more than that, that it was almost a gift," said Mellor. Nonetheless, Mellor has noted a loss of prestige at Mount Greylock, and believes the slide toward mediocrity to be part of a larger trend: "upper level schools are losing ground as worse schools are moving up."

Besides cuts in state funding, Mellor ascribes financial woes in public schools to the rising costs of health care. The expenses of health insurance and medical services continue to increase. "We all need to manage our health care in a more globally responsible way," said Mellor.

As business manager, Mrs. Mellor has been put under

"upper level schools are losing ground as worse schools are moving up."



photo by Rosana Zarza

strain by the financial crisis. "This job is very demanding," said Mellor. Besides working up to 70 hours per week, she is a single parent of two. She had long anticipated retiring from the school system when she reached 55 – the earliest age for retirement from Massachusetts public education. Though she professed to draw energy from being around young people and from her view of the mountains, Mellor has finished with the stress of her current position. "My kids encouraged me to start thinking for myself," said Mellor.

Mrs. Mellor is uncertain of what comes next. "This job has been taking so much of my energy, I haven't been able to think of any of that," she said. The summer will be an opportunity to give the future greater consideration. She may work with a non-profit organization, and she may leave the area in pursuit of something in which she can become immersed. "I want to do something that is fun, that I could feel passionate about," said Mellor. After 16 years, she is certain of one thing: "it's time to do something new."

ARTS/ENTERTAINMENT

The Greylock Echo

Quartet urged by BSO musicians to 'go on road'

By The Echo Staff

Members of the Mt. Greylock high-school and middle-school orchestras embarked April 13 on a trip to Boston as part of an ongoing collaboration with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Accompanied by orchestra director Ouisa Fohrhaltz, the students left Mt. Greylock at 6:30 in the morning and arrived to attend a closed rehearsal by the BSO with Kurt Masur, the former conductor of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra.

While at times the going was tedious as Masur would make the orchestra play one section perhaps 10 or 20 times, it did go to show the focus and detail that even world-class orchestras have to face each day to perfect their craft.

Students were treated to an appearance by world-renown Russian violinist Vadim Repin playing sections from a Shostakovich concerto.

After breaking for lunch, the students gathered in one of Symphony Hall's numerous rooms and the string orchestra was coached by two members of the BSO, violinist Sheila Fiekowsky and cellist Owen Young, on a section of *Concerto Grosso No. 10* by Arcangelo Corelli. The BSO members were dynamic and interactive, picking through the smallest technical details to the largest themes of music and demonstrated and played with



Photo by Jonah Jonathan

Symphony Hall, Boston, April 13, as seen by MGRHS students.

the students themselves to further explain and illustrate.

Lastly, the BSO members devoted an even greater amount of attention and detail in coaching a Mozart flute quartet, played by Jason Silberstein, flute, Kejia Tang, violin, Emily Baker-White, viola, and Isaiah Day, cello, at the end of which the

quartet was encouraged to "take the show on the road."

All in all, the experience helped to broaden the eyes and as Fohrhaltz put it, "Stretched everyone's minds and ears" and showed how hard it is for amateurs and professionals alike in trying to perfect their craft.

REVIEW

Spring music concert -- solos, solis, and a goodbye to seniors

Review by The Echo Staff

The Mt. Greylock Spring 2005 music department concert was a wonderful success, with a variety of new pieces performed by orchestra, chorus, and band featuring soloists or small ensembles. While many seniors were acknowledged with words and flowers, their bittersweet partings were more than made up for by vitality and joyfulness of their music.

The orchestra lead off with a baroque *Concerto Grosso* by Arcangelo Corelli, then roused the crowd with a well-loved medley from *Chicago* featuring a trumpet solo by freshman Dan Whately. The piece included snippets from Broadway standards such as Roxie, All That Jazz, and the Cell Block Tango.

The chorus then went on to sing four pieces. The first, a somber spiritual called *Sometimes I Feel*, featured senior soloists Kelsey Schelling, Thi Van Wood, and Mary DeMatteo, all of whom have been in chorus multiple years. The second and third were performed exclusively by the male members and then female members, respectively. The men sang a sweet and airy Kentucky lullaby named *Down In the Valley*, while the ladies gave a glorious rendition of *Nigra Sum*, a song based on the a Biblical passage in the Song of Solomon, sung in Latin. Lastly, the chorus joined together again in *Hiney Mah Tov*, another Biblical paraphrasing – this time of a passage in Psalm and sung in Hebrew.

Lastly, the largest of the high school ensembles, the band, played three very distinct pieces. The first, *Fanfare and Ceremonial*, was a classical piece written by Wagner. The second, the *Giles Farnaby Suite* by Gordon Jacob, was a much more contemporary piece. Lastly, the band also played a very well known and well-loved medley, the *Harry Potter Symphonic Suite*, featuring music from the Harry Potter movies written by famed film-music writer John Williams. Many soloists were also recognized in that performance.

CONTRACT

Continued from Page 1

proved the Williamstown portion of the school's budget on a voice vote with no opposition.

Pelletier said that she recognizes the decision-making process is painstaking, as whatever agreement reached will be binding. She also says that until a reasonable contract is agreed upon, teachers will continue a mild form of job action in which they withhold some services, such as staying after school.

She sincerely hopes teachers will never need to resort to "working-to-rule," in which teachers refuse to do anything

work-related outside of the school day. Teachers also began walking as a group to and from the back of the school parking lot the week of NEASC accreditation. Pelletier said that would also continue as long as negotiations are at a standstill.

Contract proposals

Teacher salaries remain a major point of disagreement in negotiations. As of now, teachers will still receive step increases (raises for each year of service) for their first 15 years of employment. Pelletier says that, with increased costs in health care, some teachers who have reached 15 or more years of service thereafter begin to suffer a net loss in income.

MGEA and the school committee are also at odds over health-insurance coverage. The adopted FY 2006 budget incorporates a 90/10 split, (the district pays 90% and teachers pay 10%). Most recently teachers asked for an 85/15 split for the three-year term of a contract.

The school committee hopes for 90/10 split the first year and 7.5% increase each year for the following two years in the amount teachers pay.

Whatever decision is reached, other parts of the school budget will not be affected. "Dr. Piechota is building a schedule that, based on the numbers in our budget that assumed a status quo, uses these numbers as far as salaries and health benefit contributions go," said O'Brien. He said no classes or teachers would be cut this year, regardless of the final contract.

Dr. William Travis, who will begin his job as superintendent of Mount Greylock Regional School district next year, explains that as health insurance costs are increasing 12% to 18% across the state, health care will remain a major issue.

"Money available to fund educational programs has decreased because increasing cost of health care now competes for program dollars," says Travis. "While I personally blame the state and federal government for not moving more quickly to reform health-benefit costs, the reality is that the local districts will have to find solutions themselves for the next several years."

Some key numbers FY 2006 Adopted Budget

ALL spending	\$8,907,910
Employee Benefits	\$2,085,963
All Wages	\$4,890,700
Teaching salaries, excluding special ed	\$3,402,909

90/10 split (current)	
Health (dist. share)	\$977,113
Health (teacher share)	\$108,568

85/15 split (proposed)	
Health (dist. share)	\$922,829
Health (teacher share)	\$162,852

PROJECTS

Continued from Page 1

pers and what else, if anything they needed to improve upon with their portfolios. Many rumors floated through the halls about how many seniors had failed. Many people, students and teachers, said that roughly half the class had failed. But after some back-and-forth worth between students and teachers, it looked to Caraco this week as if all seniors will receive passing grades on their senior projects.

"It wasn't that students initially failed because of poor writing or bad projects, they failed due to a lack of awareness of the evaluation rubric," Caraco, a match teacher, said this week. "We gave very specific feed-

back to the students. And that was always supposed to be part of the interaction -- that this was going to be nothing like an MCAS examination," Caraco said.

Caraco says the senior project, new this year for the entire graduating class, represents a "paradigm shift" in education at Mount Greylock.

"We gave them a new due date and they resubmitted," he added. "I feel great how

this faculty and staff has supported the students' success in this program. I feel great about what has happen."

And for that reason, it is not surprising some students had trouble with it. "They resisted in the middle of the year," he said. "But the kids have really persevered. One kid came in a few days ago and was in tears and he said, 'I quit, I'm not going to graduate.' He came in just as proud as a peacock yesterday and handed in his paper. I was thrilled. And he feels great . . . Once we get past the trial phase I anticipate this to be a real distinguishing characteristic of this institution."

Mr. Caraco commented, "I have no regrets. The senior project has been a great experience and will hopefully strengthen Mt. Greylock programs in future years."

The Greylock Echo

The Mount Greylock Echo is the student newspaper of Mt. Greylock Regional High School in Williamstown, Mass. Published monthly during the academic year, each issue is developed and edited by a team of editors and writers. Any Mt. Greylock student may join the staff, attend meetings and submit articles.

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Fri., June 10, 2005

Deadline:

Fri., June 3, 2005

Staff Meeting:

Tues., May 31, 2005

Staff meetings are open any Mt. Greylock RHS student and are held at 2:30 p.m. in the back of the Carleson Library.

Editors-in-Chief

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