

STUDENTS AND SLEEP

BY PAIGE BELLANGER



"I always feel sleep-deprived," laments Chelsea Neveu, a senior at Mt. Greylock. Moans quite similar to this qualm seem to constantly float down the hallways of the school, having been issued from the mouths of those with sleepy eyes. Exhaustion is a characteristic of adolescents who study, partake in extra-curricular activities, such as theater and sports, work part-time, and seldom get to sleep at a reasonable hour. Mt. Greylock is no exception to this rule and, as a result, its students are often sleep-deprived and unhappy. Says senior Hannah Cochran, "I'm so tired that I count every second of the day." This is perhaps the most dire summation of Mt. Greylock's sleep-deprivation problem, but it is a statement to which many students can relate.

The national sleep average for adolescents is 6.9 hours a night, which is approximately an hour more, on average, than the time reported in a survey of 18 Mt. Greylock students. However, this national figure is not even close to the recommended sleeping time for teenagers; almost nine hours. This vast discrepancy contributes to an assortment of problems, the least of which is a tendency to feel sleepy. Lack of sleep can limit a student's ability to learn, listen and concentrate and can prohibit the ability to think logically, cause a student to forget important

information, not only pertaining to school, but his or her social life as well. Beyond brain function, lack of sleep can also induce a proneness to acne, leave students aggressive or easily-irritated, lead to weight gain, and make teens more susceptible to illnesses such as the cold. Many students at Mt. Greylock claim to feel these effects. Celina Hoar, senior, says that her lack of sleep "causes [her] to not pay attention in class and not retain the material [that she] is taught in class." Rachel Sheppard, senior, even admits to "becom[ing] very sensitive when [she is] sleep-deprived, and become[s] upset more easily." Students blame the amount of homework that they are granted on a nightly basis for their problems with sleeping, but other factors can be equally attributed to the issue.

The simple fact is that teenagers need more sleep than adults, who require about eight hours of sleep a night. After puberty, a biological cycle is put into place that causes teenagers, among homework, extra-curriculars and work, to need almost nine hours of sleep nightly. Sleep is regulated by two internal cycles: sleep/wake homeostasis and an internal circadian biological clock. After a long, wakeful period of time, sleep/wake homeostasis tells that body that sleep is needed. In contrast, the internal biological clock

regulates weariness throughout the day. This makes it so that people are more tired or more wakeful at certain parts of the day, depending on their cycle. The problem with this system is that, for most teenagers, their body clock causes them to be the most wakeful around eleven o'clock at night, so it is natural for adolescents to be awake around midnight. Then, when teenagers rise to go to school, they are followed by both sleep-deprivation and an altered body clock, which leaves them in a tired dip until nine or ten o'clock in the morning. Jasmine Anderson, senior, cites that not being tired at night prohibits her from getting to sleep earlier in the night. For her, and many other students, this night restlessness can create a tired havoc in the morning.

In order to counteract this cruel cycle, students often resort to drinking coffee and energy drinks to keep them awake, which is not an entirely healthy solution to the issue. The most beneficial measure against sleep-deprivation would be to go to bed at an earlier hour in order to increase sleep time. However, many students find this alternative impossible due to their obligation to do homework, and unlikely due to their desires to watch TV, go on the computer, talk on their cell phone or play video games. Dan Mansen, senior, admits to

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Mt. Greylock in the Technological Era

BY KRISTA MANGIARDI

Today the terms "adolescent" and "technology" tend to go together simultaneously. Computers, cell phones, iPods, television, cameras, ect. are a constant presence in everyday life. While the role of technology is already well-developed in the personal lives of teenagers, the role of technology in the classroom is still being explored. Then, there is the issue that occurs when technology relating to personal lives invades the classroom. Here at Mount Greylock students can be found using cell phones and iPods in class, forming a distraction. Classes, however, often get to use technology to accent knowledge in ways such as using the computer lab. This broad topic is constantly the subject of much discussion in schools.

There are countless potential ways for technology to be incorporated positively into a middle and high school education. It is likely that research is the number one way students use technology as relating to learning. Finding sources for papers or furthering reading on a particular subject are popular for students to do at home or with classes during school-hours. Also, some textbooks come either on the internet, on CD, or with a supplemental CD. Technology is basically expanding options and resources for anyone who can use it correctly. Not only can students take advantage of what is new, but also teachers. Teachers can do grades and lesson plans from computers, and use technology like overhead projectors directly in teaching. Furthermore, some student testing is now being conducted via computers with positive results. In a recent Berkshire Eagle article discussing this method in other schools near Mt. Greylock, reporter Jenn Smith writes that exam, "is an individualized test that is student-paced and dynamic to child's ability." Using computers for testing versus written assessments also provide quicker results. In addition, there are televisions in several classrooms now to allow the viewing of useful educational videos. Sophomore Alyssa Tomkowicz says of this: "We could try to watch more movies related to topics, because those are much more interesting than a lecture." As adolescents may be interested in these newer ways of presenting knowledge, use of technology can apply to a larger variety of learning types. There are regularly new ideas on how these tools can specifically be utilized for the benefit of students.

In the ever-evolving world of technology there are still many controversial issues regarding their use by students and there are circumstances where negative affects can occur. Dr. Petruzella, who teaches English and Latin at Mt. Greylock says, "Technology is a very powerful, but like any tool, its value comes from its application." For example, a class can go to the computer lab and chose to do work, or they could play mindless games. It may be a fairly safe assumption to say that the majority of high school students have had the experience of a cell phone ringing in the middle of a class. Then, even more popular is texting secretly in the middle of lectures. Another worry is the use of cell phones or the memory on graphing calculators to cheat. Teens have many options on what to do with the technology they are given. In addition to negative use of these tools, schools can also chose to get nothing out of them. While some schools invest in new programs, others either can not afford it or feel it would not be substantially beneficial. On this issue Senior Duane Bailey states: "Teachers need to grow beyond their view of technology as a distracting force and embrace it as an educational opportunity. Much like a pen and paper, the tool is only as distracting as the student wants it to be." So, these resources might just have to be encouraged in the right way, or given to students and those who can use it responsibly will and those who can not will be deprived of an opportunity.

At Mt Greylock signs of new and growing technology are existent in some areas of the school, while there are other aspects that students notice lacking. Bailey continues: "Technology is by far the most underutilized and limited aspect of education at Mt. Greylock. Computers are outdated and often do not work correctly, the internet is actively censored far beyond what the law requires, and often at the expense of valid educational websites, and students are not encouraged to explore beyond the bounds of the classroom." It may be the feeling of many students that the school needs to open up its policy on technology use and trust students to use it well. The school might be behind on having the new resources as compared to other schools that have gone wireless and have laptops available for use. Mt. Greylock has evolved to use technology in a unique way in communication, however. From email lists through the school website to the phone calls

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The Book Worm

Isabel Kaufman reviews "Pretty Monsters," Kelly Link's first attempt at a novel. Read the reveiw!

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CARTOON!

See the newest bit of fun in the Echo, a cartoon!

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Best Gifts of '08

Sarah Phelps starts us off off with some commentary about Christmas shopping followed by a couple of "Top-Ten" lists compiled by our editorial staff.

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Post-High School

Tijana SAMARDZIC discusses post-high school plans and what students should expect.

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Editorials

Senior editors Matt Baker-White and Chris Densmore have written editorials about Greylock, High School, and life in general. Joining them in the opinion section is Junior Editor Patrick Madden with some commentary about how the tresses of the school day seem inescapable, particularly now that our lunch hour is quite short.

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College Affordability

Ned Kleiner discusses the economic stresses involved in the college process and just how pressing those stresses can be, especially in our current economic situation. How has the economic recession affected both students and the institutions themselves?

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TUITION FRUSTRATIONS

BY NED KLEINER

At a recent Williams at Amherst football game, aired on the New England Sports Network, NESN decided that it wished to spend some time discussing the economy with some experts. At halftime, a NESN reporter spoke with the presidents of both colleges not only about their rivalry, but also, almost in the style of Jim Lehrer, about the recession. Both Amherst's president Tony Marx and Williams' president Morty Schapiro spoke about the devotion of the alumni, and both said their colleges would continue their policies of need-blind admissions, despite the probable decline in endowment value and donations.

The recent economic downturn has affected colleges and universities in several ways. It's reduced the value of their endowments; it's led to fewer gifts and donations, or in the case of public institutions, budget cuts from the state. Meanwhile, financial aid requests from struggling families have gone up. How will all this affect Mount Greylock students applying to college this year?

Many colleges have begun to reduce spending in response to the financial crisis. MIT, for example, plans to cut \$50 million from its budget. Williams has delayed building projects, such as a new library and improvements to Weston field. Other institutions have used a combination of strategies to cut spending. Boston University has declared a hiring freeze as well as a delay on all building projects. The University of Hawaii, along with a freeze on new hires, plans to turn off air-conditioning on weekends. The University of New Mexico has decided to postpone various renovations and purchases of new equipment. The Georgia Institute of Technology has cut \$50,000 out of its landscaping budget, and restricted faculty travel. Miami University in Ohio set up a website to receive ideas for saving money, and has received over 250 suggestions. Many colleges, such as Cornell University, have reduced financial aid, lowering the annual income necessary to receive aid. Some liberal-arts schools are reconsidering their policy of need-blind admissions. When a college practices need-blind admissions, it does not make choices about admittance or rejection based on students' financial situation. Need-blind colleges can choose the most qualified students, and their campuses are more ethnically diverse. Tufts, a large university in Boston, is currently in the midst of a \$200-million-dollar fundraising campaign to finance need-blind admission, but is unsure what kind of success it will have in the current downturn. Tufts now factors financial aid into only the weakest 10% of its applicants, but Tufts' director of undergraduate admissions says that when he is forced to reject one of their weaker applicants based on their financial situation "it makes me gag."

The recession has affected every type of institution. Even the richest school in the country will have to tighten its belt. Harvard recently announced that its endowment, due to plummeting stocks, had lost 22% of its value, or \$8 billion, over the past four months. The smallest schools, however, are often the hardest hit. Many small Christian schools across the country are reporting decreased enrollment and a bleak future. Some, like Cascade College in Oregon, have already closed their doors. Some of the large public universities, which rely on government funding to keep their tuition low, have announced cuts in enrollment. For example, Cal State, the largest university system in the country, has announced plans to reduce its enrollment by 10,000 students. These cuts have created fears among many less-qualified students that they will be unable to attend a four-year college. According to the Los Angeles Times, California public universities will soon be forced to raise tuition and reduce financial aid due to decreased state funding at all levels of education.

One positive development has been the new dedication in politics to reducing tuition. President-elect Barack Obama spoke many times during the election about the need to make a college education affordable to all Americans. Skeptics, however, have asked where, in this time of \$700 billion bailout packages, Obama will find the money to finance tuition reduction.

While colleges have been struggling, families have faced their own financial problems. According to a study done by National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, while the median family income rose 147% before the recession began, college tuition and fees rose 439%, forcing middle class families to take on increasing debt. Now add rising unemployment and reduced student aid, and college becomes increasingly unaffordable. Many families have been choosing to send their kid to a public school rather than a private school, for the lower tuition. According to the Boston Globe, Recruiters at UMass have reported seeing more students at their college fairs, and hearing unusually large numbers of questions about financial aid. As colleges have watched their endowments disappear and their state funding be cut, however, they are less inclined to provide financial aid, hoping that some students will not be left out in the cold, unable to attend four-year college.

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being distracted by video games, staying up until the early hours of the morning to play them. Bri Morrison, senior, states that she is sidetracked from sleep by "homework and House, if it's on." Meanwhile, senior Jenay Haskins professes that "sports, showering after sports, dinner, followed by family time, and then homework," prevent her from getting to sleep at a sensible hour. Senior Devon Overbaugh sees only one drastic solution to the issue: "No longer have a social life... quit my job... move to Florida." Many students feel that, in order to get the required amount of sleep, they would have to cut out their social life, and almost all of them would rather roam the school suffering from sleep-deprivation than forsake fun. So what could possibly counteract this cycle?

For many schools, opening later has helped to solve the issues stemming from lack of sleep. This could resolve some serious problems as it would lead to less depression among students, reduced tardiness and absenteeism, better grades, fewer car accidents by tired, teenage drivers and could even bring about the reduction of nutritional and metabolic deficits induced by lack of sleep, including obesity. Yet, not every aspect of opening schools between eight and eight-thirty is positive; many students complain that the new schedule cuts into extra-curricular activities and work. However, to Rebecca Bishop, who wants to "start school an hour, or even a half-hour, later," this does not pose a major problem.

Yet, other student seek less drastic measures. Cody Schwarzer, junior, asks for "teachers [to] work together to make sure that too much homework is not given." Senior Gina Riggins offers a similar option, saying that "teachers should just give homework necessary for that day and take into consideration that students have other classes and lives outside of school." A less likely alternative proposed by Tessa Nalven, senior, but one that both students and teachers alike would probably appreciate is "making school shorter and having more snow days."

Yet, even amongst all of these presented alternatives, the simplest solution seems to be to deplete the amount of homework given to students on a nightly basis. Most students seem to be of the same opinion: teachers seldom, or never, factor in sleep when they assign problems, readings and worksheets. Yet, is this grievance wholly true? Abby Bishop, senior, reasons that "since most teachers want you to spend at least an hour on their class, ... someone who takes five classes and gets home from theater or sports at six o'clock [would find it] impossible to get to bed before eleven." And going to sleep at eleven o'clock would give a student seven to seven and a half hours of sleep. This leaves a one and a half hour discrepancy in sleep time, and could cause issues in body clocks, and thus, attitudes. For a teacher, one hour a night of homework is completely rational and just, but, over the course of the school day, assignments tend to build up into multiple hours, and then lack of sleep at night. For students who don't participate in after-school activities, or those who don't keep a job, a heavy workload is not much easier to handle. Five hours of homework a night, if started at four o'clock in the afternoon, would take until about nine o'clock to complete. This does not factor in dinner, nightly showers or time spent with their family. "I believe that most teachers think that we do our homework earlier in the day," says Mike Leja, senior. But even for those who start their homework immediately after school can face difficulties when trying to get the required nine and a half hours of sleep, as doing so would require an eight-thirty bedtime.

Less work is seen amongst students at Mt. Greylock as an immediate solution to the issue of sleep-deprivation. Meghan O'Grady, senior, makes this argument by saying that "when there's a lot of work and athletics, it's hard to juggle it all at once." Duane Bailey, senior, believes that there should be "three hours of homework maximum." Tijana Samardzic, junior, also points out that "cramming information in a little span of time... [is] a lot, sometimes too much, information to withhold." Many think that if teachers find that they are unable to assign less homework a night in order to cover course requirements, a study hall, or the once-beloved "extended," could be put into place. If this were to occur, students could go home with less homework, and plausibly less confusion, as homework time in school would give the opportunity to ask teachers questions about their homework problems. In the event of less outside works, students would be able to pursue more extra-curricular activities, and hunt down more hours for sleep.

The fact is, students at Mt. Greylock are sleep-deprived, due to extra-curriculars, homework, and their uncontrollable, inconvenient body cycles. Students feel the effects of sleep-deprivation, and this effects their lives both in and out of school. Most students living under this constant shroud of tiredness can find no escape from the cycle that encases them. In fact, there are only a few solutions that do not require cutting from after-school activities, including extra-curriculars, work and social life, or completely neglecting to do homework in order to hit the sheets on time; doing homework immediately after school, or as soon as extra-curriculars are over and reducing the use of distracting electronics inside of bedrooms. Unfortunately, students suffering from sleep-deprivation and complete weariness in school can only look towards the weekend in anticipation, looking forward to the ability to sleep in.

NEWS IN BRIEF

THE SPRING STREETERS COME TO MG

The usual clamor of the Mt. Greylock cafeteria was briefly replaced by song on Wednesday, December 3 when The Springstreeters, an all-male a cappella group from Williams College, performed at both high school lunches. They sang Believe by The Bravery, making the piece their own by adding beat boxing and harmonies, their voices replacing the instrumental as well as vocal elements of the original recording. The group, which was formed in 1980, currently has fifteen members. Soloist Charles Shafer, a junior from New Wilmington, PA, said they are working on about eight pieces at present, and generally tend to perform pop and rap songs. Some pieces they have sung in the past include Stronger by Kanye West/Daft Punk and Hallelujah by Leonard Cohen. Their songs all stay fairly true to their originals, but are often more smooth and harmonious. "We sing, we dance, we do other stuff too, we're not really sure what that means," stated the group in their entry on Wikipedia. The ensemble performed at Mt. Greylock in part to promote their new album, Neon, which was released on December 5. Another recent album, Metro, is available at Where'd You Get That!?! and at the Williams College Museum of Art bookstore.

COMPOSTING AND RECYCLING: COMING TO A BIN NEAR YOU

Mt. Greylock's Youth Environmental Squad is working on a few projects that will hopefully be put into effect soon after Winter Break. Two main projects are better recycling and composting at MG. If we can coordinate with either the Williamstown Elementary School or Williams College to get our compost picked up by one of the services that takes their compost, you can look for a new system in the MG cafeteria. There will be a table for setting your trays down and two areas of bins, one for trash and one for food waste. The Y.E.S. is also looking to put recycling bins for cans and bottles in strategic locations around the school. Keep an eye out for these green changes soon! If you'd like to get involved with the Y.E.S., contact Karen Lobdel, Patrick Madden, Petra Mijanovic, or e-mail at greengreylock@gmail.com.

The Mt. 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 student photographers, writers, and editors. Any Mt. Greylock student is welcome to submit articles, come to meetings, or join the Echo staff. Meetings are held in Echo Office at the back of the library, typically after school on Mondays after publication.

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The Echo Editorial Staff invites you, the MGRHS community (teachers, parents, administrators, and students alike), to let us know what you're thinking! If you have comments about the Echo, Mount Greylock, or life in general, let us know! Please submit any letters to us at mountgreylockecho@gmail.com or give them to Mr. Niemeier. Be aware that the editorial staff may make decisions to run or not run your letter depending on what we deem is appropriate. We also may elect to run an excerpt of a letter.

Thanks for your submissions, The Echo Editorial Staff.

What Happened to Lunch?

By PATRICK MADDEN

This article's headline is certainly not a jab at the food quality in our cafeteria; I actually quite enjoy our lunches here at Mt. Greylock . . . when I get time to eat them. Several factors in recent years and months have led to a curious phenomenon: lunch time has become a time for students to scurry around the school frantically trying to tie up loose ends, meet with teachers, finish assignments, and meet with various extra-curricular groups. During lunch time, actually sitting down and eating lunch takes a back seat.

Our current school day is structured in such a way that little time exists to do anything but rush to class. Four minutes in our wonderful but generously spaced out school building never seems like enough to get to our lockers and to our next class on time. Trying to get in a word with a teacher is always a bit of a precarious game, as showing up five minutes late to a class with a pass can often incur a bout of wrath from the "neglected" class's instructor. Seeing a teacher after school is impossible if you want to make the bus and difficult if you have rehearsal or practice to attend. Break is twelve minutes long, yes, but those twelve minutes always seem to vanish all too quickly. For many, break means putting instruments away, traversing the school to go to lockers, and then making the trek all the way to the gym from the other side of the school. I personally am consistently late to gym, even though I have it after break, and I certainly don't take my time strolling down the corridors.

Yet I digress from my original topic: lunch. Under the normal school day stresses, there used to be two options at lunch: complete all necessary business and then go eat quickly, or eat quickly and then go meet with teachers/academic groups. Now, thanks to the brightly posted military prison regulations cafeteria exit requirements, it is impossible to eat and then go talk to a teacher if you have not pre-arranged a meeting with said teacher and received a pass from said teacher, a process which the busy school day makes exceedingly difficult. Thus, students meet with teachers anyway and do everything they need to do, and then they go to lunch. Regulatory staff members on duty outside the cafeteria cannot, thankfully, forbid us from going to a meeting we have already attended. However, many times the lines have already closed by this point. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our patient and wonderful cafeteria staff members who always open the lines back up for us. It is also interesting to note that on days when, for various reasons, a staff member is not posted out-

side the cafeteria to tame the masses, the trickle of a few students here and there visiting teachers and lockers is decidedly anti-climactic. (We do realize the staff members at this post do not come up with the rules, and we are grateful to those who are lenient toward student needs when stationed at this post.)

The third option is to get a lunch and bring it to a variety of meetings that now happen during lunch since they can't happen at any other time. The Youth Environmental Squad, the Student Council, and the Echo Staff as well as a other groups I'm probably not aware of meet during lunches. At these meetings, students struggle to eat their whole lunch while trying to joining in on the discussion and get back to the cafeteria on time.

A new lunch event is happening this year on Mondays: Dr. P's Phi-lunch-ophies. At these short gatherings, students sit around and learn about and discuss (surprise, surprise) philosophy, with the philosopher himself. Dr. P gives us interesting handouts to read, and discussion takes place in an open forum style. There are no quizzes or grades or standardized tests to worry about; we discuss what we want to discuss and learn what we want to learn. For many, this is a refreshing and ideal educational environment (minus, of course, the lunch trays and frenzied dash to the cafeteria). Sadly, it has been difficult to schedule phi-lunch-ophies during days when students don't have any other obligations . . . during lunch. I myself have only made it to two. Next year, there is a possibility of a philosophy class, but in some ways conforming to a class format will take something very valuable away.

We are refreshed by the style of phi-lunch-ophies and used to the frenzy of a lunch period because of the numerous guidelines and requirements that surround us daily. The infamous 990 learning time rule, while intended to increase state-wide academic standards, is usually (and ironically) counterproductive. Often in an age of modernization, progressivism, and academic excellence, we neglect our deeper mission to provide healthy personal and intellectual fulfillment for every single student in our school district.

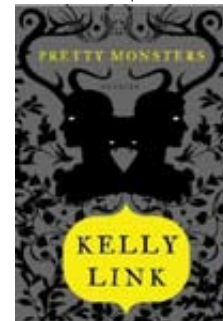
Here I must address the fact that many teachers and administrators want us to have some kind of alleviative period like extended or study hall almost as much as we want one and have tried endlessly to give one to us. But with current state "time on learning" requirements, it is virtually impossible to have such a period without lengthening the school day, a prospect which is both largely opposed

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The Book Worm

By ISABEL KAUFMAN

Title: Pretty Monsters
By: Kelly Link
Price: \$19.95



The short story is a complicated format. It's simultaneously simpler and more difficult to write than a novel: while it's shorter, it still has to be as satisfying, still has to ring as true. Personally, I am often overwhelmed by short stories; they never seem enough. I can think of very few writers who specialize in them, and I suppose it's because of this odd difficulty. It's hard to write short things. (Believe me, as a writer I can safely say: I know.)

Kelly Link writes short stories. Kelly Link has never written a novel. She's at home in her sketches and novelets, and somehow she manages to astonish and awe with each one. Each of her stories has its own corresponding world, created just for the purpose of telling that tale. Her writing is effortless in its strangeness. It seems that she has no difficulty re-inventing the universe; she does it time and time again.

I'm not going to summarize her stories. This is a near-impossible task. She doesn't write linearly; she's a surrealist. Trying to make her stories conform to a map will turn your brain inside out. They're not hard to read, though--not at all. In fact, they're almost impossibly engrossing. She doesn't ask you to suspend your disbelief as much as she distracts you before you realize that you've dropped it. She's an effortless read, while you're reading her. It's only afterward that you sit back and boggle.

It works because it's so natural. Weird things happen in these stories, which range from surrealism to sci-fi. Aliens disclose the secret of the universe to a hapless surfer. A dead girl seeks to keep her hair from taking over the world. Yet there are always elements of the mundane, the normal, the true. Link's characters are always credible. Whatever world they're living in, they ring true. A girl may be carrying ghosts on the belt around her waist, but she reads like a real girl nonetheless. The titular story, "Pretty Monsters", is in essence the story of a girl and her friends out on a not-too-strange excursion in the woods. It's just that the main character (is she the main character?) is reading a novel, and you lose sight of where one story ends and another begins. The endings surprise, but they rarely bring closure. Why? Because, for all her perplexing worlds and non-linear way of looking at things, Link is writing something like life, untidy, vague endings and all.

Yet they never dissatisfy. The stories are too rich in detail, too cleverly written to prove unsatisfying. Just because you never really want them to end doesn't mean that it's unacceptable when they do. There will, after all, always be more Kelly Link short stories. There will always be ten, fifteen, twenty new worlds to explore when you open a book of hers.

And that, here, is the blessing of the short story.

Cartoon

Created By: Rufus Paisley

Illustrated By: Keith Martin



EDITORIAL

Appreciating Education

BY CHRIS DENSMORE

As winter gradually draws the buds and greens of Williamstown into frigid sleep, and Mt. Greylock closes for two entire weeks—What a wonderful phenomenon!—the time has come to sip hot chocolate, cascade down Sheep Hill on cheap plastic sleds, and break out the eggnog and holiday spirit. In the space of two weeks, we will be placing the finishing touches on 2008 and opening the books on 2009 and its corresponding opportunity. It's a time to finish the nearly rotting Thanksgiving leftovers in the back of your fridge. It's a time to enjoy a book, watch a Patriots game, or have a snowball fight. It's a time for simplicity and recollection. It's a time to abandon selfishness and be grateful, perhaps even give a few gifts; the Christmas message of giving—and, utterly necessarily, materialistic glee—has come to the point where it transcends its religious heritage for the broader population. It's a time, dare I say, to consider the immensely positive circumstances of the world we live in.

Too often, it seems, national and international media outlets spotlight the less than ideal aspects of our society. Headlines concern terrorist attacks in the Indian capital of Mumbai (formerly Bombay, for the geographically obtuse like myself), global economic pandemonium, or numerous car bombings in the Middle East. Reading the newspaper can be a terrifying exercise. One might fret over the possibility that the world is on the verge of an eco-political meltdown. Nevertheless, would it be naïve to suggest that such negative portrayals of humanity are simply discouraging? Would it be naïve to, despite our inherent struggle to improve our race, suggest that we cherish the simple moments of pure, unadulterated joy—raising a state trophy aloft to roars of approval after a hard-fought victory or taking finals bows on stage to thunderous applause after a spectacular performance, or the aforementioned sipping of mellifluous, melted, milky chocolate—and embrace the rewards we reap for our incredible accomplishments.

Here at Mt. Greylock, we are talented athletes, thespians, and, particularly, scholars. The collective efforts of the students, teachers, administrators, and community have produced a school that is an academically excellent. Amidst, our academic success, we students remain busy as bees, not simply a group of scholars but a group of friends and talented contributors to our communities. Our boys' soccer team recently won a state title, JavaJive has returned with new vigor, winter sports are winding into action as the last residues of the fall season dissipate, and thespians transition from Shakespeare to singing as Mr. Welch eagerly awaits. The cult of Shakespeare, with its hokey-pokey dance and Founders' Theater performance, has begun its hibernation and the cult of cross-country skiing, with its nostalgic videos and renowned practices, is slowly reemerging despite an unfortunate lack of snow days. Although, as Mr. Burdick would say, the molecules in the air are slowing down and producing a chilly effect, Mt. Greylock students continue to move at a blistering pace. Although it is important to savor these successes and their sheer bliss, we also cannot forget why they are possible.

We must remember, as syrupy—Don't forget syrup on snow either this winter—as it may sound, not to forget our wonderful support staff in all this activity. As much as we may gripe about the rotting seats in the auditorium or the occasionally broken water fountains—and we secretly take pride in this slowly deteriorating building—Mt. Greylock is an incredible school, a caring, unique place. A huge component in what has made Mt. Greylock, at least for me, a wonderful place to spend my adolescence is the presence of numerous helping hands, teachers, administrators, custodians, and coaches that endure me in school five days of every week. These caring adults, despite our shortcomings, have the patience and foresight to ever delight us with their cheer every day. Now is the time to appreciate their intricacies, the color that makes our days so enjoyable: Mr. Dils's perpetual sweater-vest and disturbingly accurate weather predictions, Mr. Welch's entertaining stories, Mrs. Yarter's wonderful spirit and kind heart, or Dr. Petruzella's fortuitous wit and philosophy lunches. The list goes on and on and it is chockfull of excellence. These are the superlative educators who painstakingly supervise our growth day in and day out and are sometimes overlooked amidst our outstanding accomplishments. I would hope that we remember how much we owe these caretakers of our minds and would encourage those students who feel so inclined to offer a simple thanks to any teacher he or she prizes in our school this holiday season, a simple reminder that we do appreciate the education we are receiving at their hands. Whether that education be intellectual, emotional, spiritual, or physical, I feel safe to say we appreciate it and these excellent educators should never be allowed to forget.

Letters, Pressures, and Life Lessons

BY MATT BAKER-WHITE

MGRHS. M is for Mount. G is for Greylock. R is for Regional. H is for High. These letters, these words, all describe the unimportant part of the organization here. These are all adjectives-words for describing what is really important. S is for School. That's why we're here. For school. To learn, to grow, to develop as people. School, as defined by the New Oxford American Dictionary, is "an institution for educating." Yet so much of what happens in the buildings here at MG is not the simple memorization of dates, facts, addition, subtraction, and other mindless-yet-somehow-important minutia. Much of the education here has to do with life lessons. Some argue that we would learn far more if we just studied from books. Yet, we are here, in a school, to learn. To be educated. And not just dates, facts, and numbers.

It seems that these days, in this generation, students are able to be distracted quite easily. I'd say that we're much more easily distracted than any generation previous to us, but since I'm a mere 17, so I don't really know. My parents are always pulling the "good ol' days" lines and telling me how they had to walk uphill, both ways, in 4 feet of snow, backward, blindfolded, and barefoot to school and they liked it! But let's be honest, as enticing as a lecture on the S, D, and P orbitals might be, we'd all rather be outside playing in the freshly fallen snow. That's something our parents had the opportunity to do more than we did--play outdoors--but they didn't get to learn what the pressure of the workplace is like we do. They didn't have the pressure of AP exams or the same challenge of college admissions that we do. My mother applied to 4 colleges, and got into all of them, ending up at Williams. The idea that a student today would only apply to four schools is quite unordinary and the idea that the four schools would be schools like Williams is even more bizarre. For a student graduating from any school in 2009 to actually be accepted at all four of those institutions is just incomprehensible.

There are few things that keep students motivated in a high school of modern America; we all live relatively padded lives, with electricity, running water, and commodities that third world children would kill to have (literally). Friends, of course, are a motivator. Seeing that cute girl (or boy) the next day in English is always a draw. Athletics can't be forgotten--there's no better feeling than winning a state championship. (Ask the soccer team, they'll tell you all about it.) But not that many kids come to school these days just to learn. In fact, I don't think I've gone to school for the sake of learning since about eighth grade.

That was the year I realized that analyzing literature took the fun out of it. No longer was just reading a book good enough, now I had to read it and think about what the author was trying to convey subconsciously. Well the heck if I know--Go ask the author!!! I used to read books for hours and hours, just for fun--I would actually get scolded by teachers in elementary school for reading under the table. (Yes, I was that guy.) Now I can't read a book without thinking about word choice, sentence structure, and how many times the author uses any given phrase. What if I'm tested on this later!?! Or how about math? I used to find some pleasure (though mild) in figuring out how two plus two adds up to (Bingo!) four. Now it's solving $\frac{1}{2}x + 3 = 7$. And those aren't even all letters! Some of those are obscure and rarely used symbols! I need an ancient Egyptian to understand these glyphs! Chemistry last year was the absolute bane of my existence. (No offense to Mr. Burdick--He did an astounding job teaching me as much as I did.) To be honest, I don't think I'll ever use half of the knowledge I now have due to studying the S, P, and D orbitals. It's all become a mad rush to pass the next exam, to get to the next level.

It's almost like Super Mario Bros, the first GameBoy game I had. You work so, so hard to get to the next level, only to find that it's nearly impossible to pass. Sometimes I wonder if the school system in the US does more harm or good to young Americans. It's a pressurized environment more likely to break a spirit than to create euphoria.

And then I remember my 9th grade history class. I already had a pretty good base in world history and so I didn't really discover that much that was new about the ancient world--But I learned more about how humans interact and how people should treat each other in that class than I did in any other 8100 minutes of my life. (Yeah, that's how many hours we spend in each class every year...) Or how about 10th grade English where Mr. Dils drilled into my head how a comma is used. In the long run, it didn't really matter if I made a mistake here and there in comma usage, but I was learning something important; I was learning the importance of writing. I was learning about how important conveying ideas is. Community, as well, is part of being at MG. More recently, I saw someone who I was not particularly close with crying and offered to talk to them for a bit--and while all of his problems didn't go away immediately, it was that reaching out that made me realize that the school we go to is teaching us about how to be good people. It's teaching us how to be a real community. In my early high school years, my class was pretty distinctly split into groups and cliques. But this year, senior year, all of that is breaking up. We are in this together and we need each other to get through it. And I believe that to a large extent, that's because of the unique environment that this school has provided.

MG, or any high school for that matter, does not exist to give you all the facts, dates, or numbers that learning from books at home might. Most days, it's far more productive to actually not go to school and to write a paper at home. But MGRHS provides life lessons that would never be given at home--how to deal with a difficult boss (think that teacher who doesn't like you) or how to deal with coworkers who won't share the copy machine (think that fellow student who won't lend you a pencil when they have twelve). In the pressure-cooker that we call high school, filled with facts and figures that need to be learned, there is a subconscious understanding at some point that we're going to have to work through a whole lot of stuff we don't want to have to do at points. But there's also an understanding that after all that hard work will be a reward. Maybe that's getting into your number one school, maybe that's finally getting a first kiss, maybe that's getting an A on a paper from your least-liked teacher. And maybe, just maybe, when you write a paper for a teacher, study for hours for that test, or walk through the doors of MGRHS you'll recognize that here at MG you're learning much more than dates and numbers, facts and figures; you're learning about life.



Students and Technology, Continued from Page 1

to every student's home informing of snow days. Recent growth in technology still impacts students in school no matter how large the improvements are. In several cases it is up to the specific teacher to decide what they are going to take advantage of. Through movies, projections, computer use, and even graphing calculators teachers can make lessons more modern. There are still the options of extremely traditional classes though, where students may find that it is still possible to learn without the aid of current innovations. Overall, it is all about what is affordable, educational, and whether the pro-con list leans in favor of modern for each unique circumstance.

Technology in the use of teens and in schools will be rapidly changing for the whole foreseeable future. There are many sides to the discussion and several aspects that pertain to the type of student using the tools.

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Some Christmas Commentary And Gifts for the Highschool Him and Her

BY SARAH PHELPS AND THE ECHO STAFF

The Christmas season has been upon us for a month now, and if shopping has yet to be started, I suggest you head to the mall soon. Christmas day is such a wonderful holiday: everyone wakes up extra early to the living room to see the presents colorfully wrapped under the tree, there is always a pot of coffee brewing in the kitchen, and stockings overflowing with candy tiny gifts. Everyone is excited, joyful, and some are just a little bit relieved. A lot of work goes into driving from shop to shop and mall to mall. Oddly shaped packaging has to be wrapped neatly and with care.

However, the hardest part of all, forming a list. Whether it be in your head or on paper, conjuring up gift ideas can be impossible for some, especially for those who are so difficult to shop for. What do our friends and family want this year? The key is to keep it simple. First pick someone to shop for, now ask yourself, what are they interested in? If your sister is obsessed with soccer, get her a jersey of her favorite team. That crazy uncle who plays video games all the time? The Orange Box for X-Box 360 or PC gives a good variety and is highly rated. Your best friend loves chocolate: Where'd You Get That? sells some pretty good candies. Try to avoid generic gifts for those close to you. Buy a pair of socks for your dad, but only if he loves wearing them. It's okay to give out Christmas cookies to all your friends at school, obviously you can't be expected to buy a gift for everyone you know.

Breaking the whole process down keeps the month of December relaxed. Get shopping done early, because waiting until the last minute does no good. Think of what your gift receivers like: thoughtful presents make the best presents, even if it's something small and simple for an inside joke.

Gifts for Her

---Flowers---

Much like chocolate (see below) girls seem to have a soft spot in their hearts for flowers. We cant figure out what it is, but when you give her that rose, her eyes light up and her heart gets a little bit fluttery inside. If you get her a bouquet (Stop and Shop has all sorts!) and give it to her as a surprise, it's essentially guaranteed to produce some good results!

---Jewelry---

Get that special girl something that will last a while so she'll think of you every time she puts it on. A bracelet is appropriate for someone you've been dating for a month or so, a necklace or a pair of earrings for a girl you've been with for between 2 and 10 months, and a ring for someone you've been dating for a year or more. Be careful you dont scare her away with too "serious" a present!

---Chocolate---

It's a fact of life that all girls love chocolate. And it's also an aphrodisiac, so as a boyfriend, it's never a bad thing to throw in. Dont just get her a Hershey's bar or something from Cumbies--Go for the really good stuff, like Godiva or Lindor. Or, go to a specialty chocolate shop like the one on Main St. in Bennington. Like flowers, this is a pretty surefire gift!

Gifts for Him

---DVDs---

Get him that movie he's wanted to see for a while! It'll do a couple things for ya--First of all, it's showing you understand his world doesnt revolve around you! Secondly, every time he'll watch the movie, he'll think of you and smile inside just a little. And best of all, it gives you an excuse to spend some good old quality time with him cuddling on a couch!

---Sweatshirt---

Even if it seems like he has hundreds of sweatshirts or plenty of outerwear, if you get him a special one he can remember you by, it'll mean that much more to him. Get him a super soft one and maybe he'll think that you're almost vicariously wrapping yourself all around him every time he puts it on. Plus it's one of those really functional gifts he'll be able to use every day!

---A Night Out---

As much as he might seem to like treating you all the time, it takes a wear on his wallet. Take that special boy out to a nice restaurant and a movie! Insist that he cant bring his wallet with him no matter what so he cant even try to pay! Even if it doesnt seem like much, it's a gesture that says "We're in this together, for each other, equally."

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER HIGH SCHOOL?

BY TIJANA SAMARDZIC

Do you plan to go to college after high school? The majority of high school graduates and upper classmen follow their parents' and their own wishes and try to fulfill their dreams starting with their college career. Many people, including myself, are afraid of going away to college. It is a place of new beginnings and fresh starts; although that sounds promising, it is up to you to make it a worthwhile experience. In addition, it is also a place where no one knows you and you know no one. Having to meet new people can add a lot of stress to students' lives, especially if they are shy and reserved students. Another great fear most students have is not knowing what they will major in. "What if I don't choose the right thing?" or "I don't know what I want to do with my life yet," usually run through innocent high school students' minds.

Take a deep breath, guys, because you are not alone.

In fact, most students graduating from Mount Greylock and other schools in the nation do not know in what direction their lives will lead them. Indecisiveness and undecided ness flood the minds of young adults. This is not unusual, so do not fret. Colleges and high schools help you to figure out what is interesting to you. They give you options, which you may or may not take. With so many different kinds of majors out there, of course students will become indecisive. "I'm good at a lot of things, so it's hard for me to settle down to one area of interest," says an anonymous source. This is the way most of us feel.

As you get older and work your way through high school, talk about college increases and parents meddling in your life increases as well. Choosing whether or not you want to go to college or choosing the right college, includes your parents, whether you may like it or not. They have been through the same things you have, so who else better to help you out. If you are having difficulty deciding on going to college, you should know a few of these facts.

People who go to college and stick to it, usually get a broader choice of jobs to choose from than those who do not. Not only do they get a choice, but they also usually land better jobs. With a better job, these people naturally receive more money. Aside from jobs, college can help you get a good start on life. It helps you get a better knowledge of the world and the people inhabiting it.

If you go to school in Mount Greylock, which you all do, the teachers and administrators prepare their students very well for college and their future lives. I have recently talked to three of my friends who began college just this year. Already, all of them told me how much they appreciated going to Greylock now that they started their college career. While their roommates complain about writing one-page papers, the Greylock graduates quickly and efficiently write up multiple-page papers. This is obviously the place to be.

Recently, the number of high school students actually graduating from high school increased dramatically. An all-time high, 85% of adults 25 years or over, completed high school and received a high school diploma, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Women graduate more often than men do, but only by a minor difference. Women rank 85% and men 84%, not much of a difference, but for the second year in a row, women have had larger percentages. Although graduation rates are higher, another rate has increased; the rate of high school dropouts. One out of five ninth graders, nationwide, are most likely to drop out of high school in the next four years of their high school careers. With this number increasing over the years, the number of students graduating will decrease simultaneously. What happens to these students? They get jobs.

Cody Schwarzer, a junior at Greylock, shares his opinion on the matter: "It's not as socially taboo to drop out of high school nowadays, rather than in past years." Why is this true? Students are expected to do many more things and achieve a lot more than students of past years have done. In addition, many more people are graduating high school and going to college, because this enables them to get better jobs, which help them in economical situations. Without money, you cannot get anywhere in life today.

During the Civil War era, children were noted as an economic advantage, because they could help with plantations or factory work to help their families. Therefore, it would make sense to have more dropouts or children who did not go to school at all. As time went on through the post-Civil war era, however, this situation got better. Parents developed more of a social tie with their children and thought of them more than just 'an economic advantage.' Also, the economy slowly improved and most parents could provide for the family themselves and have their children focus on their job; to get a good education. Therefore, there are less dropouts nowadays because children do not need to support their families economically. Today, the economy is slowly declining and families are having a harder time to supply their families with everyday needs. What do you think will happen to the dropout rate? It will increase as the economy decreases.

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Winter Preview

Fall Photo Highlights



By JANELLE VAN LULING and CAMILLE ROBERTSON

The girls basketball team has high hopes for their upcoming season. Despite the loss of three key players, the Mounties are looking at a promising lineup. Led by Senior captains Amanda Karampatsos, Janelle van Luling and Katherine Wadsworth, the team is well-conditioned and ready to begin their run to the Western Mass. tournament. Juniors Erin Manners and Annabel Barrett are expected to contribute greatly to the success of the team. Returning from an outstanding 2007-2008 season, Manners will take charge of positions previously held by graduated senior Lindley Bell, and non-returning player Courtney George, and will also be a major scoring threat from nearly anywhere on the floor. Beyond the three-point arc, Barrett will be knocking down the shots. Fresh off a summer of AAU basketball and a fall season of Volleyball, Barrett will be responsible for running the point, hitting game-winners, and everything in between. Sophomores Kim Houston, Sarah Brink, and Siri Mason are also expected to be major contributors to this mountie squad. Houston will replace the presence of Ally Maynard as starting center, and will take command of the inside. Brink and Mason will see time outside the key, leading the way as shooting guards. The Houston-Brink-Mason combo will be a huge threat to league teams for years to come. Also for the upcoming season, expect to see Varsity minutes from Freshmen Kaylene Lemme, Susie Shanley, and Caitie Benoit. After the first week of practice, the conclusion can easily be drawn that the Mt. Greylock girls basketball team will be a force to be reckoned with over the next three months.

The 2008-2009 season will truly be a rebuilding year for the boys basketball team. Facing numerous challenges in the first week of practice, it can easily be seen that the boys have some work to do. The good thing? They're willing to do it. Despite the loss of seven key players, either to graduation or other reasons, the boys are hoping to have a solid season. Senior captains Chris Geannelis and Sam Garivaltis are leading the way, constantly driving their teammates to have a winning mindset. In an early season Jamboree game against McCann Tech however, Garivaltis severely injured his knee, and will be unable to play for most if not the entire remainder of the season. A fatal blow for a young team, however many underclassmen have stepped up to fill the role of Garivaltis. Junior Will Alimonos will be expected to run the point, and will take command of the court. Geannelis, and younger brother Mike Geannelis will hit the shots from the outside, and will be a major scoring component of the team. Junior Spencer Rioux will control the paint for the Mounties, along with Sophomore Brandon Decelles and Freshman Tyler Picard. Also adding into the mix for the boys will be sophomore Tommy Nowlan, who will be expected to also fill the role of point guard and shooting guard. Although the boys have faced many issues in the first week of the season, they're hopeful that they will continue to improve and have a strong season.

For the first time in many years, both the boys' and girls' cross country ski teams begin their seasons as defending state champions. Last year's great successes over the Lenox Millionaires and other teams foreshadows great things to come this season.

The girls' team graduated no members of its varsity eight but did lose two to private schools. However, with a strong and motivated underclassman base—Mackenzie Hitchcock, Amy Santella, Allegra Robertson, and Laura Nolan—and the return of Camille Robertson to join co-captains Jackie Lemme, Meghan O'Grady, Jessica Lemieux, and Jenay Haskins, their prospects are solid and they enter the season as the definite league favorites.

The same can be said of the boys' team, as has been the case for a handful of consecutive seasons. Led by captains Dylan Dethier, Cary White, and Patrick Joslin, the boys have a solid group of upperclassmen—Evan Grillon, David Nolan, Jordan Tuboly, Caleb Pudvar, and Nate Nurmi—plus sophomore Greg Karabinos who will more than replace two graduated scorers.

Unlike many sports, neither ski teams would be shocked to see an underclassman or even middle schooler make an unexpected but well-deserved claim to a varsity spot. Training hard over the summer and fall pays off, and such efforts are immediately gratifying in noticeable improvements in technique and race time.

Over the past few summers, a number of the varsity skiers have participated along with other county and college skiers in a training group led by coaches Matt Voisen and Tophier Sa-bot. Running, bounding, roller skiing, and more, they work to build general fitness as well as ski specific strength and skills.

These methods form the basis of the Mountie's dry-land training as well, pushing and challenging them as they wait for snow. The team gets on skis every chance they get in the mean-time, waking up early on weekend mornings to ski on Jiminy Peak's man-made snow and heading up to Prospect Mountain in Bennington, VT when their is a natural base. On a daily basis, coaches Hilary and Hiram Greene, Mark Santella, and a number of volunteers including parents, alumni, Williams College skiers, and others do technique drills with new skiers and lead interval, distance, and other workouts with the veterans. Friday means speedball for old and new alike.

Next weekend members the varsity and upper JV teams will head up to Stowe, VT for a long-weekend training camp and racing opportunity. The first league race will be held at Prospect Mt. on December 31, weather permitting. Everyone is excited for snow and looking forward to getting the season really underway.

The Wrestling team has an extremely bright outlook for the upcoming 2008-2009 season. With an array of athletes from not only Greylock, but Drury, McCann, and Hoosac Valley as well, the Mountie squad is full of potential. Senior Kyle Folino from Drury accompanies Senior Jordan Adames as captain. The pair showed an impressive display in an early season match, going undefeated wrestling at 140 lbs. and 215 lbs., respectively. Also claiming victory in this weekend's match, was Drury junior Sean Kilfoyle. Kilfoyle and Folino both nailed three pins and a decision, and Adames ended his day with four pins. Hoosac Junior Nick Morey wrestles heavyweight at 285 lbs., but is unfortunately out of competition for the next four weeks. Be sure to watch for Morey to claim victory upon his return. Greylock Freshman Jake Whalen, although this is only his second year wrestling, is enjoying the Varsity lifestyle, competing at 171 lbs. Whalen also had an impressive weekend, going 3-0 with

three pins. Not only does the team have wrestlers from four different schools, but both genders as well. Drury senior Stephanie Linder wrestles for the Mounties at the 112 lbs. spot, and Greylock sophomore Nicole Clement, who is currently out of competition due to injury. Despite the collage of athletes from all different schools, the Mounties successfully mold into one massive wrestling force. Though young, the team has high expectations and will be looking to claim some titles come February.

FALL SPORTS BOX SCORE

All scores given in
Win-Loss-Tie format.
(Scores from MIAA website)

Girls Soccer

Home: 4-2-1
Away: 4-3-2
Season Record: 4-5-3

Boys Soccer

Home: 7-1-0
Away: 6-0-1
Season: 13-1-1
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Volleyball

Home: 6-2-0
Away: 6-1-0
Season: 12-3-0

Golf

Home: 6-0-0
Away: 6-2-0
Season: 12-2-0

Football

Home: 0-2-0
Away: 2-1-0
Season: 2-3-0

Boys Cross Country

Season: 11-2-0
STATE RUNNERS!

Girls Cross Country

Season: 12-1-0
STATE RUNNERS!

*Not Even A Lunchbreak,
Continued from 3*

and difficult to manage bus-wise (after dropping off MG students, many of our buses go straight to the elementary school to pick up the kids there). Currently, governing bodies such as the Mt. Greylock School Council are looking at student stresses and trying to come up with ways to make the school day and student life in general less frenzied. I am certainly grateful to have faculty, administrators, and community members working towards this goal against many outside barriers.

So while not much can be done in the immediate future to make lunch time a little more relaxed (aside from possibly a bit more flexibility toward students who need to leave the cafeteria), many people are searching for ways to get more time during the day for students to fulfill a variety of obligations and meet with teachers and have some study hall time. This should not be a herculean task, but for a variety of reasons, many out of the school's control, it has somehow become one. For now, we employ a process we've all grown quite familiar with: "eat and run."