

## GREYLOCK PLANS FOR FINANCIAL FUTURE

By EVELYN MAHON

Due to budget struggles of past years, Mt. Greylock students have a largely negative view of the school's financial situation. But there is another side of the careful money management that is rarely lauded: Greylock's ability to use every penny to its advantage.

The upcoming budget will use the money saved by sharing a Superintendent, Business Manager and three more administrative positions to aid professional development, enhance technology and improve building maintenance and review.

With help from a few grants, Superintendent Dr. Ellis hopes to put an emphasis on professional development this year, making it one of her goals "to promote ongoing professional development for our teachers, to assist them in their teaching and provide more learning opportunities for the students." Part of this initiative is a contract with the International Center for Leadership in Education (ICLE). ICLE will be working with the faculty, administration, and staff on professional development, making sure curricula and lessons are comprehensive and address the new Common Core - a regulated curriculum adopted by the state of Massachusetts. Also included in this development is a continued increase in the rigor and content of lessons as well as a stronger connection between the student body and the faculty. "I call it the three 'R's" said Ellis. "Rigor, relevance, and relationship building." Rigor is ensuring that lessons continue to challenge students without discouraging them from their studies, relevance provides real-life applications for subjects and relationship building helps students to enjoy their time in the building. "The

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## PROTESTING TO SAVE THE PLANET

By PEARL SUTTER

On Sunday, November 6, students from the Mount Greylock Youth Environmental Squad gathered on Paresky Lawn at Williams College to protest the building of the Keystone XL Pipeline.

The Keystone XL Pipeline is a 17,000-mile crude oil pipe that, if built, would run from Alberta, Canada to the Gulf of Mexico carrying dirty tar sands oil through the middle of the United States. This one billion dollar project cannot be built without the agreement of President Obama's state department. So in order to tell Obama that he should not agree to build the pipeline, people all over the country gathered on the 6th to show their opposition to the pipeline, because as eighth grader, Rose Shuker-Haines said, "protesting is a great way to get out a message."

The Mount Greylock YES' pipeline protest in Williamstown consisted of sixteen students and a few adults. The protest started at 11:30 am at the Williams College Paresky Lawn where the group held up signs and spelled out "SAY NO"

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## BUILDING REEVALUATION

By ZAVI SHELDON



*The Greylock building is a perennial source of conflict for the school community. Murals, such as the one above, were painted this summer to spruce up the school.*

*Photo: Aaron Ziemer*

In mid-December, the Mt. Greylock school building will be evaluated through a series of comprehensive tests as part of an effort by the Building Committee to secure funding for a new school. The results of these evaluations will be compiled into a Statement of Interest (SOI) and sent to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) to be considered for a grant. If the proposal is accepted, the MSBA would provide a certain percentage of the cost of work done on the building.

Testing will cover all areas of the building, including the basic infrastructure—the walls, windows and roof—as well as the heating, plumbing, ventilation and electrical systems. A generous grant from Williams College has allowed the Building Committee to hire the engineering firm EDM, which has already finished testing the school's ventilation system. They evaluated the Univents, which circulate fresh air throughout the school, to measure their efficiency and to see how much noise they create in classrooms. EDM will also evaluate the plumbing system soon.

The goal of the SOI is to bring up concerns about the condition of the Mt. Greylock school building. Dave Backus, a member of the school's Building Committee, said that "all data gathered during the evaluation of the Mt. Greylock Regional High School Building will be used to demonstrate the age and inefficiency of the building to the MSBA."

If the MSBA decides to look further into Mt. Greylock's proposal, the next step would be for the Building Committee to complete a Feasibility Study. According to the MSBA website, the Feasibility Study must "generate an initial space summary, document existing conditions, establish design parameters, develop and evaluate alternatives, and recommend the most cost effective and educationally appropriate solution to the MSBA Board of Directors." To complete this stage of the grant application process, the district must select a project manager and either select a designer or have one assigned by the MSBA.

When the ceiling of the girls' locker

room collapsed in 2009, Mt. Greylock had a good argument to present to the MSBA for a new school, said facility supervisor Jesse Wirtes. However, the school was granted money only for renovations to the locker rooms. This repair, along with updates to the heating system, has significantly decreased the chances of Mt. Greylock receiving a grant for an entirely new school because of the money already invested by the MSBA. It is more likely that any grant the district receives would be just for renovations. Wirtes said that the most probable scenario would involve the gym and locker rooms remaining as they are, but many other areas of the building being torn down.

Even if this year's SOI is accepted by the MSBA, it could still be about three to five years before any construction actually begins, which means that most current Mt. Greylock students would not be here to see it. The old view was that repairs not absolutely essential to the school's daily functions should not be made, with the hope that the MSBA might consider Mt. Greylock to be a higher-priority case. However, Wirtes and the rest of the school's maintenance staff feel that this is not fair to current students, and they are doing their best to make the school better, safer and healthier, in any way they can. The support of Superintendent Rose Ellis and her team has been instrumental in the evolution of these efforts, said Wirtes.

This new attitude is obvious to anyone who began school this fall as a returning member of the Mt. Greylock community. Many areas of the building received fresh coats of paint, the cafeteria being the most notable improvement. Backus said that the entire maintenance staff have also been hard at work cleaning and repairing the school's Univent system.

Many students have noticed these changes and appreciate the hard work put in by the custodians. For Wirtes, this is a mission accomplished: "While we are waiting [for a grant], we want to make the students' experiences the best possible," he said. ■

## 1 in 650: An Interview with Benni Magnusson McComish

By EMILY KAEGI



*Photo courtesy of Benni Magnusson McComish*

*Many Greylock students have links to countries around the world. One student with a global perspective is Benni, who has connections to the unique country of Iceland. He is also a talented soccer player, getting a lot of varsity playing time despite only being an eighth grader. And as if Icelandic heritage and soccer skills weren't enough, he also has terrific hair!*

- Q: Who in your family is from Iceland?  
A: My dad is from Iceland. He didn't officially move to the United States, but he came here for school. Then he met my mom and they got married. Then I was born in the US and then my sister was too.
- Q: Do you still have family there?  
A: Yes. My dad's family still lives in Iceland. We visit one or two times a year. I've never actually lived there, even though I visit a lot.
- Q: What is Iceland like?  
A: Iceland is very cold. The people are very nice, and I guess they are very laid back. Iceland very small, only 300,000 people live there, so there are a few major cities. There are also towns with around two hundred people in each one.
- Q: Would you ever think about living in Iceland in the future?  
A: Maybe. If I ended up there at some point, definitely yes.
- Q: What are the Icelandic famous for?  
A: Well there are a couple of famous soccer players. There are a couple actors. There is also a singer whose pretty famous. She was famous in the 90's. Her name is Björk. I don't really like her, but my dad does. She's like U2 for Iceland.
- Q: Do you speak Icelandic?  
A: Yeah, I can speak it fluently.

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## SPORTS

Wrap-ups of some very impressive fall sports seasons.

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## DINERS

Alina Fein & Grace Singleton expand on the appeal of eating at diners.

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## ALUMS

Katelin Marchand looks into a trend at Greylock: former students who have returned to teach.

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## WINTER FESTIVITIES

This month, the editors have compiled a list of wintertime holidays you've probably never heard of.

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## STUDENT COUNCIL

Jake Kobrin provides an update for the Council's current activities.

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## PROTESTING TO SAVE THE PLANET

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with bodies on the sidewalk. Then at noon, the group marched to the bottom of Spring Street and back up, all the time handing out informational flyers and chanting phrases such as “Keystone has got to go,” and “Stop the pipeline.” Then, as the final part of the protest, the group walked silently through the Williams College Library with their signs. Rebekeh Packer, a senior at Greylock, led the Williamstown YES protest. She said, “Even though we were expecting about forty people and only sixteen showed up, I think we definitely still raised awareness about the pipeline problem.”

The Keystone XL Pipeline is a hard debate because there are many arguments on either side of the issue. Senior DJ Ross said, “the people for the pipeline could say that the pipeline can give the United States money which we need because we are really in debt,” and eighth grader Rose Shuker- Haines said, “since people have to build [the pipeline], jobs are created for people who need work.” However, Sophomore Aaron Ziemer said, “at the moment the safe amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is about 360 parts per million and we are at 390 ppm. If this pipeline is built, the carbon dioxide levels on Earth will rise to around 580 ppm and that is almost double the amount that carbon dioxide is supposed to be.” Senior Thalia Rossitter agrees. She added, “the pipeline will pollute a lot of the land because it would run from Canada to Mexico and so a leak could be disastrous.” The arguments on both sides of the pipeline are strong and, as Rebekeh Packer said, “this debate is mainly between the United States protesters who want to save the earth and rich oil companies who want to do as they please.”

Greylock’s YES Club was not the only group to protest against the building of the Keystone XL pipeline in the United States. On the same day as the YES protest, thousands of people from all over the United States gathered in Washington DC and then circled the White House as a form of protesting the pipeline. Websites such as tarsand-saction.org and 350.org have also been strongly advocating against of the pipeline and helped organize the protests in DC. Author and environmentalist Bill McKibben was another important figure in these protests. McKibben created 350.org and has been talking to people all around the country about the pipeline. In September, he came to Williamstown to give a lecture about the environment and the pipeline crisis. His talk inspired Mount Greylock YES members and Williams College students to support his cause. Dan Packer, an eighth grader at Mount Greylock, says, “Bill McKibben was an inspiration to all of us who saw him speak. I felt very motivated to help stop the pipeline after I found out all risks that the pipeline could cause.”

After hearing McKibben’s talk, Rebekeh Packer wanted to spread the word even more. She created a Williamstown protest against the pipeline so that all the YES members could show their feelings without having to go down to Washington DC on the day of the national protest. Then she recruited people to join the protest through the Mount Greylock school website and talking to them personally. Packer says, “the most effective way to tell people that the pipeline was bad and that everyone should join the protest was when I told them about all of the problem that it will create. I told people that the pipeline would cut through beautiful natural lands all down the country. The company building the pipeline has a history of oil spills and so it is dangerous that it cuts through the water supplies for over two million people. By building this, the world would open up the second largest fossil fuel deposit which adds enormously to the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, and tar sands oil is particularly energy intensive to refine which pollutes the air even more than conventional oil.”

The protests against the pipeline did not cause Obama to choose whether or not to allow the pipeline; instead Obama moved back the decision until 2013. Even though the nation still does not know whether the pipeline will be built, McKibben said in an email to supporters “the president sent the pipeline back to the State Department for a thorough re-review, which most analysts are saying will effectively kill the project.” The oil companies still want to build the pipeline because they say it will give the United States money and jobs, and the environmental movement still wants to stop it. So in 2013, the battle will be back and, McKibben said, “we will be ready.” ■■

## STUDENT COUNCIL: CAN DRIVES AND CANDY CANES

By JAKE KOBRIN

Mount Greylock Regional High School students saw something out of the ordinary last month. The Student Council, dressed as letters and punctuation marks, performed a flash mob to raise awareness for the can drive that they held. Council Member and hyphen Carter Stripp said, “I thought the can drive was a little slow to start, but the flash mob promotion really helped it catch on”. The Student Council first made the lettered T-shirts during one of its directed study meetings and then continued to wear them around during the course of the day, puzzling students and faculty alike. But, come lunch time, everything became clear. The group rushed into the lunch room cheering and causing confusion, then performed a well-rehearsed rendition of the can-can as they spelled out “4-H CAN DRIVE BRING CANS!” Freshman Judah Devadoss said, “I donated a few cans to the drive because I feel good knowing I have helped someone in need”. The food collected was given to the homeless. In other news, this month the Student Council will again be holding it’s candy cane fundraiser to raise money for their organization. This fundraiser has been very successful in the past and is one of the major income sources for the student council. Make sure to buy candy canes to send a festive message to all your friends! ■■

## “A HORSE! A HORSE! MY KINGDOM FOR A HORSE!”



*Sixty Mt. Greylock students performed Richard III in Founders’ Theatre at Shakespeare & Co. on Friday, November 18 as part of the 23rd annual Fall Festival of Shakespeare.*

*Photo: Kevin Sprague*



*Members of the Youth Environmental Squad marched down Spring St. in Williamstown to protest the Keystone XL Pipeline on Sunday, November 6.*

*Photo courtesy of Rebekeh Packer*

*The 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 writers, photographers, artists, and editors. Any Mt. Greylock student is welcome to submit material or join the Echo staff.*

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## Banned in the Berkshires

By NED KLEINER

*The views expressed in opinion or editorial pieces do not reflect the collective views of this newspaper or the administration, but those of the individual authors.*

In the 1970's, Mt. Greylock had a smoking lounge *inside* the school building. If someone proposed reinstating that today, he would be laughed out of the school before he was carted away to the asylum. And that is a good thing. Kids have the potential to make some pretty bad decisions, and the administration is right in many cases to try to prevent that. But, especially over the last couple years, the administration has proposed a number of initiatives that would be more at home in Puritan Boston than in 21st century America.

Beginning after homecoming of last year, the administration began to float the idea of defining what type of dancing was and was not appropriate. The ban would have prohibited any grinding where the couple was not facing one another, especially if one partner was "picking up loose change." The administration cited "parent and student complaints" as the cause. But since the dancing at last year's Homecoming was no less appropriate than in previous years, it seems that the administration is more eager to take action than usual.

Ever since I arrived at Mt. Greylock in 2006, Pep Rally has been a time for students to join together to strip down to as little clothing as possible and douse each other in red and white paint. This relatively harmless tradition came to an end this year when the administration imposed a series of prohibitions for "Red and White Day." These included a ban on shirtlessness for both girls and guys, and the confining of body paint to the neck and face. In fact, the whole format of Pep Rally was altered from previous years; the former *laissez-faire* approach was eliminated entirely, and teams and clubs were now required to submit their skit ideas for approval to Coach Jordan. And this submission was not a rubber stamp: one group was told that their proposed skit was too violent for Mt. Greylock students because it involved one student pretending to get hit in the face by another. The administration is concerned about not showing graphic imagery to the students, but this degree of micromanagement seems unnecessary, since students can see each other actually get hit in the head at any football game.

Nor does it seem that the decline of permissiveness has hit rock bottom yet. Besides the proposed ban on grinding and the restrictions on Pep Rally behavior, other new measures are rumored to be in the works. One such concept is the drawing of a line down the middle of every hallway, demarcating the right side from the left. This proposal is presumably an attempt to ensure that no students accidentally stray into the "left lane" while walking down the hall, but I personally believe that high schoolers are capable of differentiating right from left. These proposals, while well-intentioned, are misguided. Protecting high schoolers from their own tendencies to put themselves in harm's way is admirable; protecting them from their desires to express their independence is not. If the administration can demonstrate that the behavior they are banning is detrimental to the health of students or the academic environment of the school, more power to them. But if they are merely attempting to impose their moral values on the younger generation, then we as students have the right to stand up for our ideas and our code of behavior. ■■

## MIDDLE SCHOOL INTOLERANCE SPARKS CONCERN

By CALEB RAYMOND

During the past fall, there has been an unfortunate increase of intolerance at Mount Greylock in the middle school. Several Jewish students have been targeted with violence, racial slurs like "Jew-bag," and at least one case of cyber-bullying. These incidences have resulted in several suspensions. Additionally, a middle school assembly was called to address the issue in the mid-fall.

Most of the incidents have been simple hallway confrontations. However, there

was one instance of cyber-bullying when an insulting message was posted on Facebook, directed against a Jewish student. A relatively small number of students have been involved, and there have not been many similar events in the high school.

Mount Greylock does have a history of problems with racism and intolerance. For many older students, these more recent events may evoke memories of the unfortunate "Kick a Ginger Day" of two years ago. As then, we should all remember that

diversity is something to be valued and that we should respect our fellow students for their differences, not insult and abuse them for it.

The use of "Jew" as an insult, as well as "Jew-bag" is not and will never be accepted at Mount Greylock. A recent incident at Williams College involving a racial threat provided an opportunity to build community at the college, and these events can be a chance for Mt. Greylock to do the same. ■■



Recent events in the middle school have raised issues of cultural acceptance in the community.

Photo: Aaron Ziemer

## FROM LANESBOROUGH TO TOKYO: ALUM FOUNDS MINIATURE GOLF ENTERPRISE

By NAOMI DAY

While Lanesborough resident Kevin Dias was in high school, he worked during the summers at Pitch 'N' Putt & Thunder Alley, a miniature golf business, and often played mini-golf at Baker's Golf on Rt. 7. A member of the Mt. Greylock class of 2002, Dias has fond memories of golfing experiences with his friends and family, and of watching other families enjoying the experience.

About three years ago, Dias moved to Japan to teach English to Japanese businessmen and women. Since then, he has recognized that the miniature golf businesses found in the States simply do not exist in Japanese culture. Japan has something called 'Putter Golf,' but it is only found in rural areas of Japan and is primarily a summer business for ski areas. The "fun obstacles and themes" that Dias remembers from his childhood are not present in Japan.

Dias was motivated to create a Tokyo, Japan based start-up called Putter King because he felt that there was a lack of "reasonably priced family entertainment options." Mini golf is an ageless sport that can be enjoyed no matter how old or young a person may be. Putter King is Japan's first indoor miniature golf franchise: currently existing only as an app, Dias' goal is to use the app to help raise the remaining capital needed to open the first course in Japan in 2012.

In December, Putter King will be holding a large promotion in Utsunomiya City in Japan, where a real miniature golf hole will be set up for people to play golf. There will be a table where visitors can try the app as well as an arts and crafts area for kids to work on a submission to the Hole Design Contest, try the education materials, or build a cutout paper craft doll called a "wobblehead."

Dias is the sole founder of Putter King; for the creation of the app, he coordinated with a game development company from

South Africa called Tasty Poison Games. There are many miniature golf apps available to users of the iPhone, iPad, iPod touch and Android cell phone, but, Dias says, "Putter King's gameplay, physics and hole designs rise above the field." It is also the first app to feature "crowd-sourced app-level design," meaning that the creation of

challenging game: the press release can be found at <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2011/11/prweb8960457.htm>. Next year the Second Annual Putter King Miniature Golf Scavenger Hunt will be held. Dias says that "We'd love to have some students from MGRHS compete."

Putter King is currently hosting the 2011

Putter King Hole

Design Contest.

The contest is

available to everyone

around the world to

submit ideas: the top

three entries will have

their miniature golf

hole design featured

in the app, and the

winner will get \$550.

The winner will be

decided based on the

number of votes per

entry, and the contest

ends on Saturday,

December 31,

2011. Enter the

Design Contest

here: <http://www.putterking.com/en/holedesign-contest>.

Although he is

living and working

in Japan, Dias is still

attached to his home

community. This past

spring, Putter King

sponsored a Dalton,

Massachusetts base-

ball team. He hopes

to stay involved in

the local Berkshire

County community

as his enterprise

grows in size. And

although Putter

King has been

founded in Japan,

it is a global

company and Dias

hopes to eventually

bring it to the U.S. ■■



Greylock alum Kevin Dias has created a miniature golf app called Putter King.

certain parts of the app are open to the public, who are able to give ideas and feedback, instead of simply assigning the job to a group of coders. The iOS version of the app was released on October 20, 2011 and the Android version will be coming out shortly. The Putter King app can be found here: <http://www.putterking.com/en/app>.

Putter King just finished holding a miniature golf scavenger hunt. People from all over the world competed in the fun and

## Diners: The Heart of America

By ALINA FEIN & GRACE SINGLETON



Diners are beloved for their homey aesthetic. Above, personal decor with playful flair from Crazy Otto's Empire Diner in Herkimer, NY.

Photo: Grace Singleton

Reporting from Herkimer, NY

If you find yourself traveling this holiday season and in need of some nourishment, consider an alternative to the typical Egg McMuffin and hashbrown to go: a diner meal. My most recent diner experience came in the form of breakfast at Crazy Otto's Empire Diner in Herkimer, NY. While it may be unlikely that you too will be heading out to Ohio with your family – as I am – and happen upon this same diner, I hope that this description of my experience can help inform your next choices at a visit to a more convenient diner location.

Crazy Otto's has a retro diner aesthetic as it is fashioned – or at least appears to be – from two train cars that are welded together. The outside is illuminated by neon lights that blare the diner's name. On the inside, the walls are covered in model cars, movie posters, and various license plates sporting clever messages. There were also photos documenting the diner's successful endeavor to create the world's largest omelet.

The diner's specials, along with an unusual clock, are mounted on the wall facing the counter. A wheel that circles the clock face is spun as a recording of a train whistle sounds. If someone is sitting in the stool that corresponds to the number on which the wheel's marker lands, his or her meal is on the diner's owner, Scott Tranter.

Tranter explained that his interest in the culinary arts extends back to the early 1970s when he received an EasyBake Oven as a gift. He followed his passion to culinary arts school, eventually becoming the owner of Crazy Otto's and creating the "Diner Wizard" restaurant consulting service. He feels that diners hold "a special place in the hearts of many" as they combine good food with a familial environment.

These two qualities were indeed evident in my family's breakfast at Crazy Otto's. Our meals were both delicious and generously portioned. Despite the large serving sizes, my mom ate her entire plate of corn beef hash, poached eggs, and hashbrowns, and I was able to finish all of my peanut butter and banana stuffed French toast, leaving my dad as the only one who did not clean his plate. This failure can be excused, as his spinach-bacon-cheddar omelet reached from end to end of the foot-long platter and was accompanied by hashbrowns and two biscuits smothered in sausage gravy.

Diners offer a welcome break from fare usually associated with long days of travel. If you will be hitting the road during the holidays – or even if you won't be – consider a diner stop.

Reporting from Williamstown/North Adams, MA

A fun-filled trip to a diner is not reserved only for road trips. A few delicious diners exist much closer to home, as well. The Moonlight Diner and Chef's Hat are two beloved local options, but a more recent, less widely known installment is a little gem in North Adams called Big Shirl's, which happens to be one of my favorite places to indulge in a tasty breakfast or brunch.

Upon arrival, one could be easily misled by the modest size of the place, but once you walk through the door and are invited into the unsophisticated, cozy interior complete with accents of charming décor, its size only adds to its homey appeal. The light green walls are adorned with little old-fashioned signs bearing phrases such as "Country Kitchen" and "Lemonade." The small windows on the walls encircling the ten or so tables are decorated with quaint, plaid-patterned curtains.

One of my favorite qualities of this diner is the assortment of unique dishes available to sample. A list of appetizing specials, which, on my particular visit, included Pumpkin Pancakes and Cin-a-bon French Toast, was displayed on a chalkboard mounted above our table. The breakfast menu boasts not only an array of diner classics such as eggs, omelets, skilletts, breakfast sandwiches, pancakes, French toast, Italian toast, and various sides, but also some much more adventurous choices with intriguing names. Noteworthy standouts include meals titled: "Hungry Man" and "Super Hungry Man" (2 or three eggs, 2 or 3 pancakes/French toast, toast, and a choice of ham sausage and bacon), "Super Breakfast Burrito" (3 eggs, onions, peppers, mushrooms, cheese, ham, sausage, home fries, and salsa). The grandest of them all was the "Garbage Plate," composed of 6 eggs, home fries, bacon, ham, sausage, peppers, onions and tomatoes and topped with cheddar cheese. I have to add that it took all of my self-control to keep from ordering this gigantic feast, but I managed to decide to wait until Grace could accompany me to help me finish it.

Butterscotch Pancakes and Chunky Monkey Pancakes (chocolate chips and bananas) were favorites among the group with which I dined. Everyone agreed that the brunch was a great one, as the portion sizes were generous and delicious, the staff affable and gracious, and the atmosphere pleasant and relaxed.

Big Shirl's is open for breakfast and lunch, and on Thursday, Friday and Saturday for dinner from 5-9, if you would like to check it out for yourself. ■■

## GREYLOCK PLANS FOR FINANCIAL FUTURE

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important part is 'why?'" said Ellis. "Why do we have to know this? We want to apply what you're learning to world problems, so it's real world issues, not just 'because it's in the textbook'. Education should not only be important to the teachers, but also to the students."

Williams College has also helped a great deal, donating money and opportunities for students to work with teachers' assistants, tutors, and writing fellows. The college has also helped Greylock embrace the new technological era by hosting labs for science classes and sharing materials with tutors.

Due to Mt. Greylock's poor performance on the Mathematics MCAS, a lot of energy is being focused on the math curriculum. A math specialist will be coming beginning this December to help work with teachers on their curricula and lesson plans. Another significant piece of the budget is going towards improving technology: "A major goal this year is to increase our investment," says Ellis. "Over the years, Mt. Greylock has done the best they can to maintain the systems we have, but we need to modernize them."

Speaking of modernizing, a new building (or at least fixing problems with the current building) is being discussed by the building subcommittee of the School Committee. Part of this year's budget includes paying for tests to determine just how far out of code the building is. Once these tests are completed, the results will be incorporated into a statement of interest that will be submitted by the Superintendent to the Massachusetts School Building Authority. This statement of interest is essentially an appeal to the state, notifying them of our pressing building problems and need for extensive renovations or a new building. ■■

## 1 in 650: An Interview with Benni Magnusson McComish

Continued from Page 1.

Q: What is your favorite word to say in Icelandic? What does it mean?

A: Kex. It means cookie.

Q: People hear a variety of last names for you, would you mind clarifying?

A: I have two last names. One of them is my mom's last name. In Iceland you take the dad's first name and add "son" or "daughter" to the end. So since my dad is named Magnus, I'm Magnusson. My mom and dad took McComish and Magnusson and used them both. So my full name is Bernhardur Magnusson McComish. But people call me Benni because they can't pronounce Bernhardur.

Q: What about your hair? Everyone in the school seems to be obsessed with it.

A: In Iceland, when I was in 2nd grade, all the kids kept their hair long, so I kept it long. And now I guess it's famous.

Q: Does your hair generate any nicknames?

A: At the beginning of the year Coach Dils called me Braveheart and so did some of the Greylock soccer players. My squash coach calls me Sunshine from the movie Remember the Titans.

Q: So finally, just for fun, if you could have any superpower what would it be and what would do with it?

A: I would read minds. That way I could ace every test because I would know all the answers. ■■

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## MOUNTIE WINNING STREAKS

By TOM DILS

Five undefeated regular seasons. That is what Mt. Greylock's athletic teams posted this fall. For the dozens of Berkshire County teams in seven fall sports, there can be at most seven undefeated records. Greylock managed to grab five of them. The fall of 2011 is certainly a special season, but many of the squads at Greylock are accustomed to winning every game they play—so much so that some incredible winning streaks have been tallied. Many are still in progress. Part I and Part II will unearth the incredible streaks occurring in Greylock athletics.

**Part I:** The boys soccer team has dominated Berkshire County in the past four years—the careers of Luke Costley, Jesse Foehl, Ryan Mahar, and Tom Dils. They have not lost a game in the county since 2008, which adds up to 55 in a row. This span also included a home winning streak of 33 games, which snapped in the final game of the regular season in a tie to Pittsfield. In these four years, Greylock lost only five times and were shut out only three times. As a result, the boys soccer team captured four straight North Division titles and four straight number-one seeds in the W. Mass playoffs. Said Coach Dils, “In my twelve years of coaching, there have been individ-

ual teams that dominate, but nothing like our teams from the past four years.”

Greylock football has its own impressive success story. Dating back to the fall of 2009, the Mounties have not lost a single game—now 24 victories in a row. With Kent Hanson at quarterback, the team has finished the past two seasons undefeated in Berkshire County. In their two County Championships, the games were polar opposites but the results were the same: victory for Mt. Greylock. The Mounties capped off their perfect 2010 season with a 46-6 County Championship win over Hoosac and a Super Bowl victory over Athol. This season, the job is not over yet, but Greylock has already beaten Hoosac in an hard-fought 8-0 county title game. They turn their sights to the Super Bowl playoffs in hopes of achieving another perfect season and stretching the winning streak to 26. For comparison, the longest NFL winning streak is 21 games. Greylock football has earned its place as the top dog in Berkshire County and has an impressive winning streak to show for it.

Part II will appear in the next issue of the Echo, featuring boys and girls cross-country running as well as developing streaks from Greylock's winter sports. ■



Senior captain Josh Harrington played a key role on the Boys' Cross Country team this season.

Photo: Katie Rathbun

## FALL SPORTS RECAP

By BEN KRANT & TOM DILS

### BOYS' CROSS COUNTRY

Regular Season Record: Undefeated  
League Finish: Berkshire County Champions  
Playoff Finish: W. Mass Champions, 8th Place finish at states  
Captains: Aaron Taylor, Josh Harrington, Matthew Chung  
“Our team has always worked together. Older runners lead the younger ones and the chemistry is special.”

### GIRLS' CROSS COUNTRY

Regular Season Record: Undefeated  
League Finish: Berkshire County Champions  
Playoff Finish: W. Mass Champions, 4th Place finish at states  
Captains: Laura Nolan, Susie Shanley, Kaylene Lemme.  
“We truly are a family. Our hard work shows for itself.”

### BOYS' SOCCER

Overall Record: 16-1-3  
League Finish: North Division Champions  
Playoff Finish: W. Mass finalists  
Second straight undefeated regular season  
Captains: Luke Costley, Tommy Dils, Ryan Mahar

### GIRLS' SOCCER

Overall Record 11-6-3  
League Finish: South Division Champions  
Playoff Finish: W. Mass quarterfinalists  
Best league finish since in the current seniors' careers  
Captains: Kristina Wadsworth, Annie Flynn, Erin Ostheimer  
“A heartwarming and memorable season.”

### FOOTBALL

Record: 10-0  
League Finish: Berkshire County Champions  
Playoff Finish: Continuing towards the Super Bowl  
Second straight undefeated season in Berkshire County  
Captains: Kent Hanson, Pat Malloy, Kurt Schulteis

### VOLLEYBALL

Overall Record 19-1  
League Finish: Berkshire County Champions  
Playoff Finish: Western Mass Semis  
Undefeated regular season  
Captains: Kelsey Goodwin, Meaghan Albert,  
“The team can only get better from here. We worked hard, and making it to this stage in the tournament is the highlight of my volleyball career.”

### GOLF

League Finish: Missed playoffs  
Robert Glick was top ten in Berkshire County scoring average  
Seniors: Robert Glick, Mike Munzer, Hayden Barber, Siera Holland ■

## Conussions a Worry for Athletes

By KELSEY GOODWIN

With the opening of another winter sports season kicking off, Mt. Greylock athletes are eager to hit the court, ice and snow. Yet with the anticipation of another upcoming season comes the tedious tasks of filling out participation forms and attending the mandatory parent-athlete code of conduct meeting. And this year, coaches have one more thing to check off before any athlete is eligible to participate—a mandatory, on-line course on concussion education.

Although many teams have participated in preseason ImPACT testing, all athletes and parents as of this fall are required to watch an informational video about concussions and head injuries. Athletic Director Lindsey von Holtz explains that the new mandatory education is not an MIAA standard but of the Mass. State Department of Public Health. A new policy has been implemented as of March 2011 that all coaches, athletes and parents must participate in some form of concussion education before a student is illegible for competition. In addition to the mandatory education, Mt. Greylock will be forming a concussion committee, responsible for reporting any concussions (athletic or otherwise) or head injuries to the state. After attending numerous seminars and an athletic director's conference, von Holtz chose an on-line education course for student-athletes. The program, developed by the National Federation of State High Schools and the Center for Disease Control, explains what a concussion is, and what damage can occur to the brain, and how to determine if an afflicted athlete is ready to enter play again.

The difficulty with concussions is that they have ambiguous symptoms and are easily undetected. Participation while concussed can be very dangerous and pose a greater risk to the athlete. Concussions are caused by a strong blow to any part of the head, and most of the time there are no visible signs of any damage. The brain is protected by spinal fluid and skull, but a forceful blow can force the brain to become injured. There are wide variety of symptoms associated with concussions, ranging from the

physical (headaches, nausea, dizziness) to the mental (trouble concentrating, difficulty remembering new information, sleeping problems). Concussions can also lead to long-term brain injuries and pose an increased vulnerability to concussions in the future. One such threat is Post-Concussion Syndrome, which can damage a person's ability to think and concentrate as well as have long term effects such as a change in personality or prolonged headaches. Another threat is Second-Impact Syndrome, which is when a patient who has already gotten a concussion receives another one before the first one has entirely healed. SIS puts the patient at an even greater risk for prolonged brain damage. While permanent mental trauma is uncommon, it is not out of the question.

Concussions and serious head injuries have been a popular subject in the media due to the extensive crackdowns of professional athletic leagues such as the National Football League and National Hockey League. In 2010, the NFL started strictly enforcing penalties and punishments to players who initiated in helmet-to-helmet hits in an effort to decrease the number of concussions per season. In addition to stricter rulings, the NFL has conducted a variety of testing on players who have had one or more previous concussions consulting with leading neurologists and sports physicians.

Serious head injuries are not, however, only dangerous at the professional level. Recently, high school concussion rates have increased - and male athletes and football players are not the only vulnerable parties. In recent studies conducted over several years, girls' teams have near equal or higher concussion rates as boys' teams of the same sport. After football, girls' soccer is next highest in reported concussions, followed by boys' and girls' lacrosse.

So as athletes begin to tune up for the upcoming winter season, be mindful of the severity of head injuries. Concussions are a very real threat to all athletes and can be detrimental to one's mental health. ■

## GREYLOCK FOOTBALL TOPS HOOSAC IN COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP

By ALEX WHITE

For the second straight game, cars were lined down Route 7 waiting to get into the Greylock football game. Additional policemen had to be on duty to direct traffic and overflow parking spread out onto the grass. The game involved Greylock and fellow county power Hoosac Valley. Earlier this season, Greylock had squeaked out a 6-0 victory over the Hurricanes that included two goal line stands by the Mountie defense to hold Hoosac scoreless. The county championship proved to be much of the same bruising style of play.

The game was scoreless going into the third quarter with Hoosac forcing two goal line fumbles in the first half to keep the Mounties off the board. A last second heave by Hoosac quarterback Tanner Bird to end the first half was picked off by cornerback Hank Barrett. With the start of the second half, the Greylock offense took charge of the game and finally got on the board late in the third quarter on a two-yard run by quarterback Kent Hanson. Greylock added two more on Ethan Ryan's two-point conversion. It turned out that eight points would be all Greylock needed - and all it would get - for the rest of the game. The defenses battled for the remainder of the third quarter and through the fourth quarter. A blocked punt by Brett McCormack and an interception by Noah Kelley, both in the fourth quarter, took the air out of Hoosac, as Greylock controlled the remainder of the game. “We had gotten close to blocking a couple punts earlier in the game, and luckily I got a relatively free path to the punter and was able to get an arm on it,” said McCormack.

County champs Mt. Greylock will next play Mahar on Tuesday, November 29. If Greylock, the one seed, advances past Mahar, they would play in the Super Bowl on December 3. ■

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## GREYLOCK ALUMS RETURN TO TEACH

Current teachers reflect on changes at the school over the decades.

By KATELIN MARCHAND

Imagine Greylock with no “Senior Hallway” yet having over 1,200 students, the guidance office used as the library and the exercise room was the cafeteria. In the late 60’s and early 70’s this was the reality for students attending Mount Greylock. There are many members of the faculty that attended Mt. Greylock including: Ms. Barrett, Mr. Belouin, Mr. Burdick, Dr. Burdick, Mr. Flaherty, Ms. Fohrhaltz, Ms. Green, Coach Gill, Mr. Pannesco, Mr. Powers, and Mr. Stanton. According to the aforementioned, over the last several decades Greylock has evolved.

The “Senior Hallway” was added to Mount Greylock in 1969 moving the library and the cafeteria into the newly built corridor and leaving empty rooms that would soon become the guidance office and the exercise room. “I watched them build the south hallway,” recalled guidance counselor, P.J. Pannesco, a 1970 Greylock graduate. Since 1969 the physical structure of the building has been exactly the same but the layout has been drastically altered. One difference from the Greylock of the past was that teachers in each department shared an office where they had their desks. While the inside of the building has been reworked the outside has changed as well. The rut around the football field was a track where all the home meets took place. Unfortunately the track was not maintained and when Williams built their track they offered to let Greylock athletes use it so our track was abandoned.

The daily schedule of Greylock in the 70’s and 80’s was unlike the current

schedule now. There were period long study halls and an optional “8th period” that was from 2:20 until 3:00. During this time teachers were available to help students. Since there was this optional end of the day help, extracurriculars did not start until 3:00. Likewise, sports and class options have changed since the 70’s. “There were no girl sports, only cheerleading,” says math teacher Patrick Stanton. Stanton also commented on the class options. “All the girls went to home economics while the boys went to wood shop.” Nowadays, there are both girls and boys teams for most sports. “Greylock also lacked technology,” says Scott Burdick, a chemistry teacher. Now, the electives are varied, none are gender specific, and technology is woven throughout most classes.

Although there were normal changes that happened to high schools through the decades, there were some changes that needed to take place. “There was even a smoking lounge,” says English teacher, Liza Barrett. Not only was this smoking lounge available for faculty, it was available for students. Another aspect that may now be considered an atrocity was the mandated home economics for girls and wood shop for the boys. The fact that no boy would dare take home ec. and no girl would take wood shop shows how the environment at Greylock was certainly different, some might even say sexist in the 70’s and 80’s. The gender-specific ideology of Mt. Greylock at the time also influenced extracurricular activities since there were no girl sports



Almost a dozen teachers, including math teacher Patrick Stanton, above, attended Mt. Greylock.

Photo: Katie Rathbun

teams.

As those with modern values can hope, all the teachers interviewed concurred that Greylock has metamorphosed for the better. Why did they return? Many graduating seniors are looking forward to leaving this area and moving away so what would invoke people to come back? There was one such senior who graduated in the early 70’s who sarcastically said the parting words of, “See you later Greylock!”

Little did this senior know that he would return to MGRHS just seven years later and work here as the middle school guidance counselor. If you haven’t already guessed, this unnamed senior is Mr. Pannesco. In reality many teachers returned because of job opportunities that opened up, but some returned because they have always respected and admired the school and wanted to teach here. ■■

## WINTER CHEER

By THE EDITORS

We all have winter traditions—whether they be decorating a Christmas tree, lighting a menorah, or walking an antlered dog down Spring St. in the Williamstown ReinDog Parade. Let’s take a look at few winter celebrations whose mascot you probably won’t see at the mall.

Eid ul-Fitr—August 31. Marking the end of the month of Ramadan, Muslims, who have not eaten in daylight for a month, break their fast on Eid by giving gifts and eating large meals with family.

Diwali—October 26. The Hindu festival of lights is a five-day festival marked by ceremonies, fireworks, and sweets and Hindus celebrate the victory of good over evil. Participants light oil lamps and clean their homes to make the goddess Lakshmi feel welcome.

Bodhi Day—December 8. This is the Buddhist holiday celebrated most recently, commemorating the enlightenment of Siddhartha Gautama, or as he is more commonly known, the Buddha.

Human Rights Day—December 10. This day honors the United Nations General Assembly’s adoption and proclamation in 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the first global doctrine of human rights. The day is used to call attention to rights infractions and global issues including poverty, unlawful arrests, and discrimination, but also to celebrate progress.

Ziemassvētki—December 21. Participants in this ancient Latvian festival would light fires, extinguishing them at the end to signify the end of the previous year’s unhappiness. A feast takes place where a space at the table is reserved for Ghosts, who are said to arrive on a sleigh.



There are many more winter celebrations than the common “Christmahannukwanzadan.” Most feature feasting and a celebration of light.

Yalda—December 21. This Iranian holiday, popular since ancient Persian times, is a social occasion marked by merriment and traditional foods including watermelons, mersimmons and pomegranates, symbolizing the sun. Customarily, participants stay awake until sunrise eating, drinking, and listening to poems and stories to celebrate the long-expected defeat of darkness against light.

Winter solstice—December 22. On this day, the earth’s axial tilt in this hemisphere is farthest away from the sun, meaning there is the least amount of sunlight. Nearly every culture has a celebration based around the solstice. In a nod to the Pagans, today many people feast, build bonfires, and partake in general merriment.

Festivus—December 23. This holiday, first introduced on the television show

Seinfeld in 1997, is lauded by those frustrated with the commercialism of the winter holiday season. Participants place an unadorned aluminum pole in their living rooms. During a lavish dinner, there is an Airing of Grievances, where family members announce complaints about each other. After dinner, in the Feats of Strength, the head of the household challenges a family member to a wrestling match. The festival does not end until the challenger is pinned.

HumanLight—December 23. Originating from a Humanist community in New Jersey in 2001, this holiday offers a time for good wishes and well being separate from religious traditions.

Isaac Newton’s birthday—December 25. If this brilliant English scientist were still alive, he would turn 369 years old this year. We can only wonder how many more discoveries he would have made. We at the Echo recommend celebrating his birthday by putting testing out the three laws of motion. Build a rocket ship, push your friend on roller-skates, or drop eggs out of your window, and celebrate good ol’ Newton today.

Festival of Sol Invictus- December 25. Historians believe that this Ancient Roman festival of the unconquered sun may be the basis for the date of Christmas.

Koleda—December 25. An ancient Slavic holiday originally celebrating death and rebirth in honor of the sun and God, Koleda has now been incorporated into Christmas celebration in parts Croatia, Russia, Poland, and the Czech Republic. Teens and children walk house-to-house

greeting people, singing and sifting grain in return for candy and money.

Jonkonnu Parades—December 26. These Caribbean street parades, believed to have African origins, feature lavish costumes. Jonkonnu groups parade from midnight until shortly after dawn to the music of cowbells, competing for cash prizes. Hogswatch- December 32. In Terry Pratchett’s Discworld series, residents of Ankh-Morpork celebrate Hogswatchnight with a decorated oak tree in a pot and a visit from the Hogfather.

Twelfth Night- January 5. Celebrated on the eve of the twelfth and final day of Christmas in Renaissance Europe, this holiday was traditionally celebrated with festive partying and even some cross-dressing, hence the title of Shakespeare’s play.

Coming of Age Day—January 20. This Japanese holiday is held in order to congratulate those who have reached the age of majority, 20 years old, over the past year. Coming of age ceremonies are held in local judicial offices, followed by after-parties among family and friends.

Chinese New Year—January 23. The Chinese usher in the Year of the Dragon with Lion Dances, lanterns, gift-giving, and lavish meals.

Hedgehog Day—February 2. In modern society, we look to a groundhog to see whether winter will continue. Thousands of years ago, Romans observed a similar event, watching to see if during hibernation a hedgehog looks out of his den and sees his shadow under the clear moon.

Whatever you plan to celebrate this break, even if it is simply the vacation from school, Happy Holidays! ■■