Some states consider lowering the drinking age

By David Hoyt
The College Voice

Not far from Mercer there is a place where miracles, both large and small occur regularly. The hungry are fed, the illiterate learn to read, the addict is rehabilitated and people leave feeling empowered. The place is the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen, known as TASK. But with tough times ahead, even TASK may have trouble keeping the miracles coming.

TASK is open Monday through Friday, 52 weeks a year; they serve two meals a day. Last year they served more than 178,000 meals to hungry patrons. TASK’s charity output has increased every year. But with the economic crunch and global food prices skyrocketing, this year may be their hardest ever.

Over 60 percent of TASK’s donations stem from individuals, while only 3 percent come from the government. According to Jaime Parker, TASK’s Community Relations & Development Associate, “government funding has a lot of strings attached.” The government would want all patrons to be identified and would require them to demonstrate the extent of their need. ‘This goes against TASK’s primary mission, providing meals to all those who are hungry.”

Unfortunately, for both TASK’s patrons and for TASK itself we are experiencing the ‘Perfect Storm’ reads the bold header to TASK’s July donation appeal. Due to a multitude of factors food prices have gone up more than 35 percent this year. In addition, until recently gas prices have been soaring making it more costly for TASK to pick up food from local Food Banks, their prime suppliers of food. Finally, food donations from both individuals and local food stores have dropped by more than 50 percent. Melisa Rivera, TASK’S Director of Operations, explained how the majority of the food comes from the USDA to local food banks who then distribute it. TASK’S food is mostly canned goods, some fresh produce, and whole chickens. Local supermarkets also donate bakery goods, fresh produce, and non-perishables. However, despite all these donations, Melisa says that ‘our pantry has been a bit bare.”

Jaime Parker, another TASK worker, also touched on the fact that it is not only food that TASK needs donated, but hygiene products as well. In recent times, however, they have been receiving less of these items.

See TASK page 6

Local soup kitchen struggles to keep up

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Students perform a powerful rendition of Ibsen's Hedda Gabler

By Susana Sanchez
The College Voice

Mercer’s production of Hedda Gabler shook the dust off the numerous classical productions of the play spectators have enjoyed for more than a century. The stage decorated with Victorian furniture, a stove, a table, a drawer and a picture of Hedda’s latest lover formed Gabler’s, gave the audience the notion that they were about to step back in time.

The Academic Theatre Company and Entertainment Technology Program presented Hedda Gabler as a student production in the Mercers’ Community College’s studio theater during two weekends last month.

The play, however, was far from conventional. The original play was written in 1890 by Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, and it has seen countless reproductions. So audiences might have expected to see actors portraying the original Norwegian characters. Instead, they were all played by African-Americans.

Hedda’s producer acknowledges that one of his goals was to stimulate conversation about race. Jody Person, Professor and the Theater Program Coordinator, says that most Americans feel uncomfortable talking about race issues and he adds, “It’s okay to talk about race because if you have trouble discussing race, seeing and talking about this production of A Doll House adds, “But it’s okay to talk about race issues and he might have expected to see actors portraying the original Norwegian characters. Instead, they were all played by African-Americans.

Hedda’s producer acknowledges that one of his goals was to stimulate conversation about race. Jody Person, Professor and the Theater Program Coordinator, says that most Americans feel uncomfortable talking about race issues and he adds, “It’s okay to talk about race because if you have trouble discussing race, seeing and talking about this production of Hedda gives the audience member a tremendous opportunity to grow.”

Person also added that until this interview no one had asked him about his casting choices. He said that fairly often, people are afraid of talking about race, when indeed fear is one of the causes of racism.

The story line hewed to the original. Hedda marries George Tesman with the hope to improve her economic and social status when he gets a university appointment. A rival with an important book threatens to get the position instead, but when he accidentally loses his manuscript after a drunken night, Hedda finds it and burns it, aiming to help her husband get the job.

The plot is complex, but essentially the rival and her lover try to re-write the book, and Hedda helplessly commits suicide.

Many productions have portrayed Hedda as a monster. Yet so is this production. Person said that the play sought to “humanize Hedda as much as we possibly could by portraying her as suffering from hysteria caused by inanity,” During the Victorian era, most if not all women’s psychological and physical maladies were diagnosed as hysteria. Doctors did not consider physiological causes in trying to diagnose the illness that plagued Hedda’s ear.

Hedda’s physical pain was visible to the audience. Ibsen at the beginning and at the middle of the play, she is alone on the stage hearing oceanic sounds as her body shakes due to the painful ringing threatening to leave her deaf.

Kendra Yu, advertising design major says, “Hedda was very different, her character was kind of pathetic and sad. She used people around her and took advantage of the men around her.” Others audience members were more sympathetic toward Hedda. English professor, Laura Knight, says that Hedda “has a strong personality, but because she is stuck in a time period that does not allow her to openly show this, Ibsen gives her credit by not using her husband’s last name, Tesman, but her name, Gabler, for the title.”

All the actors had to audition to earn their part. Professor Person says that by raising the bar students start to realize that they have to “earn what they get and they will be better students getting tougher to get improvement.”

Hedda and George Tesman’s characters played by Deena Jiles and Solomon Mason were the strongest performances. Their intense emotions were showed by their body gestures and voice tones. In particular Hedda’s irrational and wicked laugh revealed her hysteria.

It is interesting to see how thus play first produced more than 100 years ago keeps captivating people’s attention. Person says it is because “our world has changed so little,” as Hedda says, “It is this little world that I have stumbled into.”

Deena Jiles performs the title role in Mercer's production of Hedda Gabler. Unlike other portrayals that cast Gabler as a wicked villain, Jiles works to bring out Gabler's humanity by emphasizing the pain the character faces.

Students make Ibsen’s A Doll’s House real for modern crowd

By Mabel Duran-Sanchez
Reporter

Throughout the month of November, The Academic Theatre Company and the Entertainment Technology Program, at Mercer County Community College, presented "A Doll House" at the college’s Studio Theater which is adjacent to the Kelsey Theatre and located on the first floor of the CM building.

Considered a controversial play since its release in the late 1980, "A Doll House" exposed the realities of marriage and with it women’s roles during the Victorian era. Throughout "A Doll House" one discovers the family dynamics of the 19th century, specifically the contrasting women are very relevant issues.

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Stephanie Landau as Nora Helmer receives love and devotion from Torvald Helmer played by Tommy Searle IV in Mercer’s student production of Henrik Ibsen’s A Doll’s House. The play questions the role of Nora as the “doll child” and “doll wife.” It is often considered one of the first true feminist plays.
By Daisuke Katsumata with Contribution from David Hoyt
Reporter

SLAM POETRY ROCKS NUYORICAN IN NYC

It is a typical Friday night in New York City. Beside a small building, 236 East Third Street, in the East Village, a line of people in their 20’s and 30’s stretches around the block. There must be over a hundred people and they all seem to be excited. Are they going to get into a highly exclusive nightclub party? Not quite. Here’s a hint: poetry.

On the Friday Night Slam at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe, a place full of small tables, a rickety bar and tons of people from all walks of life. One of the best known and most renowned slam poetry hot spots in the US, every Friday the Nuyorican hosts a dynamic line up of live performances featuring spoken word poets who compete to win “the slam.” Emphasis is on not only the content of the poems, but also on the delivery. The poets perform their own work, usually memorized, and often in a way that resembles the rhythms and intonations of hip hop music.

The way the slam competition works is that at the beginning of the evening, the emcee selects five audience members at random to act as judges. After each poet performs, the judges give the performance a score from 0-10 with a “10” being the highest. The poets are gradually eliminated with the highest scores advancing to the next round. The winner of the evening’s slam may get a few hundred dollars and a chance to compete at a higher level of competition.

One of the regulars at the Nuyorican is the lovely Mahogany Browne. She starts the evening encouraging the crowd to dance to popular hip hop tunes, and she gives commentary on current events. The atmosphere and the emcee create a sense of an intimate environment and shared experience that isn’t usually found at a club on Friday night in a city of 13 million people. The energy in the room is electric. As one patron puts it: “There’s a lot of body happening in here!”

One of the regulars, a woman who refers to herself simply as Valerie, explains why she keeps coming back. “You get to know the artists. The artists themselves are part of the audience.”

Many of the performers will be familiar to anyone who has ever watched Def Poetry Jam on the HBO cable network. Lots are locals, but others come from around the country and around the globe. The level and intensity conjured by all of these spoken word poets keeps the audience engaged. Topics often focus on serious issues such as racial and sexual injustices, but there is also an acute sense of hope and dignity conveyed.

One of the regulars, Clay says he and Foster are friends and enjoy parenting together. Having come out as gay in a recent issue of People magazine, Aiken says that his son is the only man in his life at the moment. He recently appeared on Broadway in “Spamalot.”

JOAQUIN ZIHUATANEJO

At the heart of it...we have everything in common

-Joaquin Zihuatanejo

One of his poems, “Speaking in Tongues,” was inspired by unkind words by a stranger in a mail. The stranger was angry about Zihuatanejo speaking Spanish to his daughter. “If they can’t speak our language they don’t belong here,” the man said. The nasty encounter became a catalyst for a defiant poem challenging ignorance. The poems final line is, “Maybe it’s time we embrace our differences like they were our children and just / Let them be.”

While Zihuatanejo is currently on hiatus from his teaching position due to his performance schedule, he has incorporated slam poetry into his curriculum in order to get students interested in the magic of words. He tells them, “You may want to go to far off galaxies at first, but don’t. Write about what you know, what you live.”

Photo | Ken Rosen

SLAM poet, Ebony, delivers at the Friday Night Slam at the famous Nuyorican Poets Cafe in New York’s East Village.

Hip-hop star M.I.A. is pregnant. There is currently no information on what the name, gender or expected date of arrival is. “When I found out I was pregnant and ‘Paper Planes’ was reshuffled in one week. ” seemed like the whole world was rushing in one week.

M.I.A. PREGNANT

By Daisuke Katsumata with Contribution from David Hoyt
Reporter

The man who inspired Taylor Swifts, 18, newest hit “Love Story” has been discovered. Joaquin Zihuatanejo, slam poet, was introduced to the famous Nuyorican Poets Cafe in New York’s East Village.

SLam poetry rockS nuyorican in nyc

Entertainment

Tell us about your inspiration.

-Joaquin Zihuatanejo

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Spotlight on slam poet: JOAQUIN ZIHUATANEJO SHATTERING BORDERS

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It was bold. It was racy. It was crazy entertainment. Richard O'Brien's "The Rocky Horror Show" was a big hit on November 8 at the Kelsey Theatre. Upon entry, patrons were asked if they had ever seen this show live before. Reply with a no, and a tube of lipstick was whipped out. The woman with the lipstick proceeded to mark the newbie with a single scarlet letter V. Whether it is on your face or hand, it doesn’t matter, as long as the mark is present. The V of course, stands for “virgin” so everyone in the audience will know what you are. The woman also urged everyone to buy a bag full of little squirts in the face. Students were asked if they had ever seen Rocky Horror. As the show began, a few members of the cast stood on the stage in their lingerie and played games with the audience. They called a few “virgins” up to the stage to play. "virgins" were allowed to yell out all kinds of crude comments. Many long time fans of Rocky Horror tradition.

"Shall I Tell You What I Think of You?" were charismatic and convincing playing the role of the King. Although his singing was average, he was often funny and was able to succeed perfectly portraying the character of the King through his unusual mannerisms and a dialect that spanned the borders between Vietnamese and Conehead.

The Rocky Horror Show came to the Kelsey Theater to see it. Amanda Long, a second year student at Mercer said, "Rocky Horror is the best thing ever invented!" A lot of people obviously felt the same way since many girls in the audience dressed to resemble the cast. Not everyone was quite comfortable with all the sexual innuendo that was present. Tyvan Sells, a first year student at Mercer said, "I'm a little bit disturbed by this."

The show can be disturbing if you don’t go in with an open mind. However, if you allow yourself to accept the show for what it is, a classic production, you will have an awesome experience. Just be aware that this show is not for the easily offended or homophobes and especially not for children.

\[\text{Production of The King and I succeeds and even shines}\]

When it comes to musicals, few are more famous or highly-acclaimed than Rogers and Hammerstein’s "The King and I" and the production at Kelsey Theatre did little to diminish this reputation. The production, which starred Elizabeth Rzasa as Anna Leonowens and Fred Gropper as the King performed in front of large full crowds during various dates spanning November 14 to November 23.

The two hour show was directed by Paula Baron and produced by Suzanne Smith. The story itself tells the tale of a widowed English school teacher who, at the request of the King, travels to the East Asian Kingdom of Siam to teach English among other subjects to the many children of the King’s royal house. The script deals with the themes of culture clash, traditions, and acceptance of change as the story progresses. Much of the plot revolves around disagreements between Anna and the King as well as the rest of the cast and crew. The Kelsey production captivated the audience with mostly exemplary acting, effective choreography, well played music, and some terrific singing, lead by the two stars Rzasa and Gropper. Gropper was excellent as the King and was very convincing playing the role of the King. Although his singing was average, he was often funny and was able to succeed perfectly portraying the character of the King through his unusual mannerisms and a dialect that spanned the borders between Vietnamese and Conehead. Elizabeth Rzasa’s masterful performance as Anna stole the show. In every scene of the play, she was brilliant. Her singing of classics such as “Getting to Know You” and “Shall I Tell You What I Think of You?” were charismatic and performed with precision. Most importantly, Rzasa had a tremendous chemistry with every actor or actress that she interacted with, making every scene she was in a joy to watch. This is not to say that the supporting cast was mediocre, far from it. The singing of Robert Farruggia and Eryn LeCroy in the roles of the separated young lovers Lun Tha and Tuptim was easily the best in the production. Frank Ferrara was a good candidate for the best supporting actor in his role as Sir Edward Ramsay. He was easily the funniest in the production and the most fun to watch. Unfortunately, there is only one prominent adult male role in this production, so he was not able to stay on the stage for long. Even the acting of the children was surprisingly good, especially since they were only five years old.

As good as the play was, it was not without its flaws. The show got off to a shaky start. Actors jumped each other’s lines, transition music played over the beginning of the first few lines of a scene, and a comedic line got lost in the shuffle. The execution of the play got better as the actors began to relax and get into a collective rhythm about 15 minutes into the performance. The fundamental problem that the production had was a lack of overall comic relief and some awkward delivery of lines. To their credit, the actors did get better as the night progressed.

In all, the Kelsey production of The King and I was well cast, designed, and performed. The quality of the overall performance of the production was better than what one would expect given the size and production constraints of local theater companies like Playful Theatre Productions. Those who were able to attend one of the performances over the last two weeks were treated to a production that was certainly worth the price of admission.
MOUTHWORKS HAMS IT UP AT LATE NIGHT SERIES

By Patrick Lee

Mercer’s Late Night Series, hosted by Post Midnight on November 7, 2008 featured a performance by Mouthworks, Mercer’s comedy performance troupe.

Mouthworks is made up of students and directed by Professor Kathi Palacio. The cast of Mouthworks perform different skits, all with different themes but each with a humorous edge. At the LNS show, the cast opened with a puppet show acting out the song Copacabana by Barry Manilow.

Mouthworks’ theme for evening was “Things you can do with Jell-O.” One skit in particular that drew laughter from the crowd was the “Jell-O Baby” skit. The Mouthworks cast acted out skits in hand as they made humorous fun explaining how Jell-O babies were so inexpensive, more fun, and less messy than a real baby. Another skit showcased the cast’s ability to portray humorous emotions as they acted out such topics like being forked in the eye, poisoned, and drowned.

There was a mixed reaction from the crowd. “Mad funny,” says Nathan, a third year business major. He went on to note, “[some acts] had nothing to really do with the theme, but it was [still] funny. I don’t live around in this area, but if they were around, I would travel to see them.” When asked if he would ever see himself joining Mouthworks, he declined stating, “I’m not a comedic kind of guy, so that kind of thing is just not for me.” Angela, who attended the show but is not a Mercer student, had this to say, “[was] interesting, sort of funny. If asked if she would travel to see the Mouthworks show on the road, she simply said “No,” a second year nursing student, felt differently. “Really lame” she states. “I’m not joining, not traveling to see them, and I’m not really having fun watching them.”

The College VOICE caught up with several Mouthworks cast members including Hayley Kimmel, a second year student studying Jazz Voice and Suraj Bajaj, a second year nursing major. Adam Politis is a Mercer graduate from the Hotel Restaurant Management programs and also Mouthworks alum. Asked for the basic concept of Mouthworks, Politis answered, “It’s informal sketch comedy, not improvisation.” Kimmel added, “Nothing is improv on stage. A script is written and carried with us to keep things on track, keep things flowing. We go on, and basically listen for each other’s cues.”

According to Politis, Mouthworks has been around for 7 years. Suraj adds, “2 shows every semester, that equals 28 shows in all, but you might want to check up on that math.” When asked where the material comes from, Bajaj responded, “We basically get our jokes from just getting together and goofing around.”

The performance was a success; it entertained most of the audience and appeared to be fun for the performers as well. When can you see Mouthworks again live? “Look us up on facebook for any upcoming events,” says Kimmel.

The 2008 cast of Mercer’s own Mouthworks performance group.

MOVIE REVIEW: Twilight is a cult phenomenon worth the ticket price

By Melissa Drift

Based on the popular book series, Twilight is the story of a girl who got swept up in a lot of trouble for the boy she wanted to be with. That’s a common occurrence perhaps, but what if the boy is a vampire? That’s the experience of seventeen year old Bella (played by Kristen Stewart) when she goes to live with her father in Forks Washington after her mom remarries. There, she gets to know Edward Cullen (played by Robert Pattinson), the school’s designated mysterious loner. Every high school, and certainly every high school movie has one.

Similarities to the typical teen movie end there. The portrayal of the high school experience in a small town was surprisingly believable. It’s not one of those movies where out of touch actors in their late 20’s try to pass themselves off as kids. The picturesque outdoor scenery and low lighting give the movie a dreamy, dreamlike feel. If you like supernatural thrillers or if you want to see a teen movie that’s actually well made, you should see this one.

Register for Spring classes now!

Spring Session Dates: 15 A. January 20 - May 11
5 Week A. January 20 - March 9
10 Week A. February 20 - February 23
15 Week A. February 23 - May 11

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Losing a challenge? Consider the Honors Program! If your GPA is 3.5 and you’ve completed 12 credits, contact program coordinator Prof. Carol Bork at borkc@mccc.edu or 609-586-4880 ext. 3860 Or drop by LA 172 for more info.

*Last day to apply for May graduation February 5

Free Wine Tastings at Cool Vines in Princeton

By Mark Lombardi

Cool Vines on Nassau Street in Princeton offers free wine tastings every Tuesday from 5-8 pm and every Saturday from 1-3 pm. They also offer classes to learn about the art of wine tasting.

At a recent Cool Vines tasting there was much to learn. First, there are the basics. Wines can be broken down into three basic categories; whites, reds, and rosés. The names of wines usually tell where in the world the wine came from. Although white wines are usually paired with lighter fare and reds with beef, this rule is not hard and fast.

The Pinot Noir (a white wine) that Cool Vines offered during its tasting was called Oregon, a domestic California wine produced on the south central coast around Santa Barbara. It had a subtle fruit taste to it but overall was rather dry. They recommend pairing it with any sort of roast white meats or fish and also suggest that any "red drinker" try it.

Another wine presented was a Zinfandel called Bu-sina, also a domestic wine, from Sonoma Valley, California. This wine was relatively dark for a red and carry a true red feel, yet the smell hinted at more fruit involvement.

Anyone interested in broading their pallet, learning more about wines or simply finding a good wine to pair with a holiday meal would get a lot out of a Cool Vines tasting. The staff are organized and polite, the experience informative, and since they are free the price is right for the tight student budget!
With economy down, fewer monetary donations expected this year at TASK

By David Hoyt
The College Voice

Cont. from pg. 1 too. According to Parker TASK hasn’t yet run out of food, but it could happen. “We keep- ing our fingers crossed that this holiday season brings in the do- nations we need,” Parker said.

TASK’s patronage spikes at the end of every month because welfare begins to run low. At the start of the month people receive their checks and pay expenses such as rent, food and more. By the middle end of the month the money has run dry and people come back to TASK. However, Jamie says that “we are seeing new faces, I think due to the economy.” She con- tinues “people who come here are at the bottom of the income bracket. I think that bracket is increasing.” Melisa Rivera also commented on the amount of new faces; in particular there are a lot more young people with babies.

As the economy continues to struggle, TASK’s Executive Director of TASK, says that they have had so many people who needed food that “they had to close the food bank and get their supplies in.”

Like many other food banks, they are looking to the corporate area for help. "There have been many national businesses that have given back to us," says Jamie. "Several companies have been generous with us with boxes of food and other donations.

A day with the TASK volunteer corps

By David Hoyt
The College Voice

On a cold, blustery morning, the day before Thanksgiving in downtown Trenton, there’s a line forming outside the door to the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK). The line is stretches to- wards the end of the block with more people joining every min- ute.

Inside the building the atmosphere is warm as people hustle about to prepare for the 10:30 opening rush. When the doors open and people stream in to avoid the cold, it is clear that with out the help of these volunteers TASK would not be possible.

According to Dennis Micai, the Executive Director of TASK, on any given day there are “about 40 volunteers.” Over the span of a year TASK is aided by approximately 2,500 dif- ferent people coming from all backgrounds including multi- ple churches, local high schools and middle schools, Education- al Testing Services (ETS) and those who just want to lend a hand.

Volunteers’ help goes from chopping vegetables to tutoring. Before lunch is served, the tables are filled with stu- dents and tutors. Tutors teach English and Math to support TASK’s patrons working to ob- tain a GED. Every weekday morning, volunteers also pre- pare meals. People wash dishes, chop vegetables, sort donations and serve food.

Part of an assembly- line to wrap meals to, Rachael Bernstein of Grauer Middle School is experiencing her first day at TASK and she’s learning as she goes along. Rachael’s classmate, also part of the line, comes often with her sister and mother. Rachael describes the experience saying: “It’s…fun and rewarding” and that she would “definitively come back.”

Daniel Layton has been volunteering for over a year. He describes how he got started saying that he saw the line out- side TASK and wondered what it was all about; after finding out he began volun- teering.

L a y t o n describes the atmos- phere at TASK say- ing, “some people just call this their home.” He notes how TASK never turns anyone away and that people respect that. Altercations don’t hap- pen on TASK grounds; “It’s like neutral territory,” he says, “If there’s arguments, they take it outside.” But people don’t go outside to fight, they work it out. There’s “always a solution. They find that solution,” says Layton.

Denita Baldwin started volunteering in TASK’s adult education program. She says, “Before I was at home, watch- ing TV…now I’m occupied.” She adds, “It makes you happy to make others happy.”

"Before I was at home, watching TV…now I’m occupied…It makes you happy to make others happy.” -Denita Baldwin

While the picture painted ap- pears bleak instead, TASK is not giving up. They have learned in tough times to use all the resources available more efficiently. They haven’t turned any hungry per- son away in 26 years and they will do all they can to avoid having to do so now.

It was all about; after finding out he began volun- teering.

WHAT IF WE'RE FIGHTING
OVER OIL OR FIGHTING
TERRORISM, BOTH ISSUES
RELATE BACK TO OUR FOOD
POLICY. SO FAR 4207 U.S.
SOLDIERS AND 89,544
IRAQIS HAVE DIED
SINCE THE START OF
THE WAR IN IRAQ.

THE WAY IN WHICH THE U.S. POLICY SUBSIDIZES CORN, WHEAT, SOY AND RICE LEADS TO HUGE CENTRALIZED FARMS THAT GROW ONLY ONE CROP.

THE SYSTEM OF CENTRALIZED FARMING –ENORMOUS FARMS PRODUCING A SINGLE CROP– IS VULNERABLE. A SINGLE BIO-O rgANISM OR OTHER PEST I COULD NOT ONLY WIPE OUT HUGE CROPS IT COULD POTENTIALLY ENDANGER MILLIONS OF LIVES.

FOOD SHORTAGES LEAD TO POLITICAL DEStABILIZATION. THERE HAVE BEEN FOOD RIOTS IN MORE THAN 30 COUNTRIES IN RECENT MONTHS. SO FAR ONE GOVERNMENT HAS FALLEN. DESPERATION FEUls EXTREMISM AND TERRORIST MOVEMENTS GAIN STRENGTH IN SUCH CLIMATES.

WE NEED A LOuS OF nATURAL RESOURCES IN NOt only 30 COUNTRIES. THIS IS A WEAKNESS THAT WE CAN LEA P FROM. WE ARE INCREASING OUR DEPENDENCE ON OIL AND GAS AND THE U.S. RELIES ON OIL AND GAS TO SHIP FOOD WHICH MAKES IT NECESSARY FOR THE U.S. TO RELY HEAVILY ON FOREIGN OIL FROM UNSTABLE REGIONS SUCH AS THE MIDDLE EAST.

21.4 percent of Trenton residents are living below the poverty level.

7.7 percent of all house- holds in NJ experienced food insecurity and hunger last year.

5 year old girls are the age and gender hardest hit by poverty in Trenton.

For a list of sources used HERE OR INFORMATION ON VOlUNTEER AT THE TRENTON -WWW.MCCC.ORG

THE way in which the U.S. POLICY provides more than $25 billion per year in subsidies for agribusiness.
These Are the People in Your Neighborhood - The People at Task

By Susana Sanchez
The College Voice

If you go to the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen and stand on line to receive a meal, you will find yourself standing beside some of the more than 600 people who come here to eat each week. Talking to the people in line you will find that the hungry in Trenton come from all walks of life and each has a story to share. There are mothers, children, young men, old men, people with jobs who are hungry, people who are homeless and hungry. Hunger is the unifying factor.

While standing in line you may run into Adam or Joe (they asked that their last names be used). Both live in an abandoned building with no heat, electricity or water, which they called an “abandominium,” and both have heartbreaking histories to share.

“Miss Kelly I am being interviewed” Joe exclaims as he7 kansas, TASK’s Adult Education Coordinator, walks by. Though Joe is pleased that someone bothers to ask him about himself, the story he tells is gut wrenching. He describes how his mother died from a heroine overdose when he was one year old; his father constantly abused him. He went to live with his grandfather from ages seven to fourteen. When his grandfather died, he had to live in foster homes.

Adam has a similar story to share. He says his mother died when he was ten years old; his father abandoned him. After living for a short period of time with his aunt, he passed the rest of his childhood in different group homes.

Although Adam and Joe are not currently working, one third of TASK’s patrons do have jobs. Jaime Parker, TASK Community Relations and Development Associate, says that many patrons are living on a fixed income but plenty are simply under-employed, meaning they have jobs but still cannot make ends meet.

Luis Rivera originally came to TASK for help after he was laid off from his job and didn’t have enough money to eat. Eventually he found work again, but he continues to come to TASK as a volunteer, to give back to the community. Even now, Mr. Rivera says that he earns around $1,600 a month, which barely allows him to pay for all his bills.

Some paycheck, indeed, fall short of affording housing on Trenton. The cost of renting an apartment in Trenton ranges from $800-1100 a month. A person earning the minimum wage would have to work 60 hours a week to get by, but even so they may have to decide whether to eat or pay the utilities, particularly when heating prices spike in the winter.

Adam and Joe were forced to leave their group and foster homes when they were 18. At different times they turned to drugs and struggled to get by, though both are currently sober and neither has lost his hope in a better future. Adam has a culinary certificate from Gloucester County College, and Joe has an emergency medical technician (EMT) certificate and a cardio-pulmonary resuscitation certificate (CPR) from Gloucester County College.

They are giving back to the community by tutoring other TASK patrons, helping them to obtain their GED diplomas. Adam is looking into becoming a doctor.

According to a New York Times article by Food Expert Michael Pollan, “After Cars, the Food System Uses More Fossil Fuel Than Any Other Sector of the Economy — 19 Percent. And While the Experts Disagree About the Exact Amount, the Way We Feed Ourselves Contributes More Greenhouse Gases to the Atmosphere Than Anything Else We Do.”

The Diabetes and Heart Disease Problem Means that Children Born in 2000 (According to One Study) Are Likely to Lead Shorter Lives Than Their Parents Because Complications From These Two Diseases Shorten Life Span by Years. They also Put an Enormous Strain on Our Nation’s Health Care Spending. According to the CDC the Annual Cost for Diabetes Alone Exceeds $132 Billion.
Your next investment.

Tony is a financial expert who has been in the market for quite some time, but there's also a person who is interested in the human factor. The College of Business at William Paterson University showed him how to blend both into an incredible career.

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SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE TO QUALIFIED STUDENTS
Women’s Soccer season comes to a close

By Leah Hodge

The Lady Vikings soccer team put up a good fight against Monroe Community College’s Lady Tribunes on Sunday November 9, losing in overtime. But a questionable call by a referee might have prevented Mercer from winning the game and progressing on to the National Tournament.

The game began with Monroe’s Anne Benetti scoring within the first two minutes of play, with the half ending up being a battle between Mercer’s goalie, Heidi Summers and Monroe’s goalie, Kimika Forbes. Both goal keepers blocked shot after shot from hitting the back of their team’s net. By the end of the first half, the Lady Vikings were still down by one, and needed to come up with a different strategy if they wanted to win.

Mercer’s head coach, Jodie Ricciardi, gave her girls a pep talk during half time. Heidi Summers said about the coaching staff that, “...they all are involved with practices and push us as hard as they can be.”

The coaches have us do team workouts, team bonding, and ask us for our opinions on drills and things for us to get the best out of our practices.”

This kind of coaching helped because in the second half Mercer took charge by scoring two goals within a minute of each other. The first goal was by Marlene Chotkowski, and seemed like a simple save for Forbes. Though somehow the ball had managed to slip through her fingers, making the game 1-1. With the Lady Vikings feeling momentum, and Monroe’s goalie still shaken up, Mercer’s Casey Kenny literally walked right into the Lady Tribunes’ net, scoring the second goal. After these mistakes Monroe’s Head Coach Sal Galvano decided to take out Forbes and put in Amanda Prestigiacomo as goalie keeper for the rest of the game.

“...We had close games and games that we dominated. We practiced really hard and gave it our all.” - Heidi Summers

With only a short period of time left on the clock, Mercer’s victory was almost in sight. That was until Monroe’s Maura Martin tied up the game with 2 minutes and 15 seconds left in the half, eventually forcing overtime play. The way overtime time works is that there is two halves of 10 minute play, but whenever the first goal is scored that team receives the victory. With only 2.2 seconds left in the first 10 minute half, it looked as if another half would need to be played. Then two players, one from each team, were going after the ball, and ended up falling to the ground with their legs intertwined. A foul was called against Mercer, giving Monroe a direct kick right outside of the 18. Taking the kick was Maura Martin, the player who had scored the tying goal earlier in the game. Martin quickly kicked the ball over all the defenders heads, right into the very top of the goalie’s net, winning the game for the Lady Tribunes.

“Being the goalie, I was as ready as I could have been. The girls had marks, we had a wall, and it just went too fast. The ref, feeling should have not made that call,” said Summers about the last play on goal, “...we all felt that we deserved that win, really.”

Many Mercer fans agreed with Mercer’s goal keeper and were distraught over the seemingly unfair call by the games referees. The collision appeared just to be a mix up, not a foul.

Either way the Lady Vikings had a great season of 17-4-1. “We really worked together and worked hard to get as far as we got. We had close games and games that we dominated. We practiced really hard and gave it our all. The season was fun and enjoyable,” goalie Heidi Summers said about her team’s season.

WHY ARE WE THE VIKINGS? considering the Mercer mascot

By Zachary Gilmore

Why is Mercer’s mascot a Viking?

More than 37 percent of Mercer’s student body identify themselves as being African-American, Hispanic or Asian. Though central New Jersey once had a strong Polish population, very few Mercer students are of Nordic decent. These facts may cause some to wonder if a group of Scandinavian pirates who raided and colonized wide areas of Europe from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth centuries actually makes a good mascot for the college.

To gain insight into the nature of Mercer’s mascot, the VOICE talked to the man behind the furry bear cape, glitter black and silver pants and green tunic: graphic designer Frances Paixao.

Paixao both designed the outfit and teaches it to represent Mercer at numerous local sporting events. Over the last eight years he has donned the long blue coat and billowing pants to attend events such as Trenton Thunder baseball games as well as New Jersey Devils hockey matches.

According to Paixao, even since the school was established in 1866, the students of the school were referred to as the Mercer Vikings. Paixao believes the Viking mascot represents the student body because the Vikings were tough characters and they were intelligent people.

Joshua Carver, one of the two team captains on the men’s basketball team, says he likes the mascot because to him it is courageous and powerful. According to him, other Mercer students do not mind the Viking. Carver says that “...the mascot is the symbol of the school.”

In a survey of 32 Mercer students, 22 knew the mascot is a Viking. When asked if the students felt that the school mascot represents the student body well, 11 people agreed, seven disagreed, and 14 remained neutral.

When pressed for ideas for a possible alternative mascot students suggested a pink panda, a duck-billed platypus, a saber-tooth tiger, a fire torch, and a jaguar. It was clear from the suggestions that most of these students do not believe it matters that the mascot cannot represent the community in any way.

Since only 20 percent of the student body seems to think the Viking makes an odd mascot in the first place, and no one has a different mascot they are advocating, it is likely that Paixao will get to wear the furry cape for years to come.

Men’s basketball falls to Harcum after a fierce fight

By Zarinah Dzhumababajeva

Though leading most of the time and scoring in the first 2 minutes of the game, the Mercer men’s basketball team got defeated 66-63 by Harcum College on Saturday, November 22.

“It’s just a tough loss. We are still trying to get used to each other. This is a tough one to swallow because it was a close game,” says Preston Eric, wearing number 42 on Mercer Men’s basketball team.

Although the Vikings were ahead many times, the Harcum College team kept catching up, leaving the spectators on the edge of their seats. Mercer’s men to command of the court right from the start. Three minutes in they scored a 3-pointer and were already up 5-0. A minute later they hit the basket again, bringing the lead to 7-0.

Just as the end of the first half Harcum managed to catch up and overtake the Vikings leaving the score 27-20 at the half.

During the halftime break, when asked if the Mercer men’s basketball team would catch up, spectator Anthony Ross, 21, said, “I am a Mercer fan, I think we are going to win if we get more transitions.”

“Come on man, we will win!” said six foot-five inch Om-boushoub Idriss, number 40 on the Vikings Basketball team as he came out of the locker room at the end of the break.

Kevin Preston, 47, another fan, said, “The Vikings just got to have their patience, take their time before throwing a ball.”

The buzzer sounded and the second half began. Harcum fought to hold onto their lead, but the Vikings pulled ahead 63-56.

“They are very good!” said Roger Gordon, an assistant coach for the Vikings. With just 1:37 remaining the scored was tied up at 63-63. Tensions rose and the spectators were out of their seats trying to cheer the home team to a victory.

With only 90 seconds remaining, Harcum got off a shot and brought the score to 63-64. With a flurry of wild throws in last seconds Harcum widened their lead defeating Mercer 63:66.

Even though the Vikings got defeated, they made Harcum work their hardest every minute of the game.

Says Howard Levy, the head coach for the Mercer men’s basketball team, “We played great game for 34 minutes. They like each other. It’s just hard for them when the game gets crazy towards the end. But I am encouraged and positive. They are really starting to pick up what we are trying to teach.”
By Daniela Weinapple
Reporter

The election is over: it is time for people to unite behind their new leader

Between the television ads, the speeches, the debates, the lawn signs, the rumors, the truth, and the lies, it felt like this day would never come. But it did, and finally, the United States knows who its 44th President will be. Now it's time for the dust to settle and for Americans, no matter what party they voted for, to invest hope in their country's soon-to-be leader.

The night of November 4, after President Elect Barack Obama had gained the 270 electoral votes needed to secure his win in the election, Senator John McCain made a concession speech in Phoenix, Arizona. In his speech, McCain stated "I urge all Americans who supported me to join me in not just congratulating him, but offering our next president our good will and earnest effort to find ways to come together, to find the necessary compromises, to bridge our differences, and help restore our prosperity...in regards to our opponents defeat. He also stated "Whatever our differences, we are fellow Americans. And please believe me when I say no association has ever meant more to me than that." Although McCain told his supporters that they should support their country and have hope in the candidate that was chosen for the Presidency, not all seem to be listening. Even during McCain's speech, supporters deliberately went against the candidate they supported and booed whenever Obama's name was mentioned. McCain had to stop his speech several times to calm down the crowd and encourage them to silence their noise.

Another example of ridiculous Obama bashing can be found on the website Facebook.com. Of course it's expected for people to join Facebook.com groups supporting or bashing a candidate during the election, but it didn't stop there. After Obama had won the Presidency, groups such as "Impeach Barack Obama" began popping up. In fact, there are over 24 groups on Facebook.com that have titles revolving around impeaching Obama. The largest of these groups has over 7,000 members in it. Discussion topics within the group hold surprising titles such as "Not My President," "Obama Had Breast Implants Removed!" and "What the HECK got all these people to vote for him!! I mean he's pretty bad, can anyone see that!!" Now that's just embarrassing.

America is a free country and freedom of speech is allowed, but I have to ask, do people really believe that joining a Facebook.com group called "Impeach Obama" is going to help the country? Not to mention the fact that Barack Obama is not even President yet. That alone would make it pretty difficult to impeach him. Actually, it would make it impossible. Soon after the election, Jordan Sweeney, a freshman at Francis Marion University, created a Facebook.com note labeled "UNBELIEVABLE FRUSTRATION." The note expressed Sweeney's annoyance over the lack of support she felt McCain supporters were showing post-election. In the note, Sweeney says "You should have hope and faith in your president, whether or not he was the one who got your vote. If you dislike or disagree with Obama, that is entirely up to you, but to bluntly insult him is ridiculous. He's our next President. Deal with it. Don't wait until he screws up, but believe that he can make a difference."

The election is over: it is time for people to unite behind their new leader.
How to deal with competitive holiday gift-givers

Why we can’t read: how poverty and policy conspire to rob us of hope

Cell phones are a classroom menace that must be stopped

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By Richard Hutchinson
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THE WAY IT IS
Katrina Brophy

Everyone should treat each other how they would like to be treated, but that doesn’t apply to the cutthroat, holiday shopping season. The holiday season is a time meant to share our blessings and give thanks. Instead, Christmas has been turned into an excuse to spend huge amounts of money. It seems that the list for whom to exchange presents with grows each year as a result. Personally, I stopped exchanging gifts with friends. However, every year a friend will give me a Christmas present that I won’t be expecting putting me in a sticky situation. At times like this, I resort to re-gifting. Yes, I re-give unused presents and in turn, I don’t have to spend money. Some may call it cheap, but in this economy it is the only solution to over-zealous gift givers. Here are Katrina’s rules to follow for successful re-gifting:

1) Keep a stash of extra gifts. It is usually a unicorn poster or purple toe socks that you got from your great-aunt who doesn’t know you very well. These are perfect to keep around and for awkward times.

2) Act casual. If a friend comes up to you with a gift and you obviously do not have one, be cool. Just say, “Hey, I bought you a gift but wasn’t sure we were going to exchange. I left it at home.” This will give you some time to stall and find something to give them. If you’re extra clever, keep some already wrapped goodies in your car for convenience.

3) Only re-gift to certain people. This is extended for use to your school friends or co-workers. It’s not wise to give your significant other, parent or best friend an almost expired Starbucks card. Remember that it is a last resort.

4) Use caution when you re-gift and to whom you re-gift to. Remember Will Ferrell in Old School? He gave the breadmaker! Do not do that, ever. Try not to give someone something they gave you already. It will totally blow your cover.

Now you are well prepared to beat those pesky competitive gift givers at their own game. Happy holidays!

By Jackie Puchta
 Reporter

How annoying it is when someone’s cell phone goes off during a class! There is a loud ring, the teacher stops teaching and everyone looks around to find the culprit. When the professor resumes teaching, the person with the ringing cell phone will whip it out of their pocket and turn it to silent or off, but that doesn’t work. A vibrating phone is some girl who is endlessly texting doing his Facebook page from his son, has been under federal investigation for tampering with the regular curriculum in order to “teach to the test.” With funds and sometimes their own jobs at stake, administrators were put under intense pressure to show results. In some cases, this lead to desperate acts like the grade doctoring. Students who were already behind got cheated again. We were pushed from one grade to the next, until we were pushed right out into the real world.

In my high school in Trenton I witnessed the clash of a poor district and a bad government policy first hand. The results were teens becoming pregnant, incarcerated and often dead. But every year a few of us make it to Mercer. Of those who do, hardly any have the same educational advantages as their counterparts. Teachers abandoned the regular curriculum in order to “teach to the test.” With funds and sometimes their own jobs at stake, administrators were put under intense pressure to show results. In some cases, this lead to desperate acts like the grade doctoring. Students who were already behind got cheated again. We were pushed from one grade to the next, until we were pushed right out into the real world.

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If you have a bank account, consider withdrawing your financials in the new year. So you failed that one class and increase your chances of passing a class! Apply now.

Bumpy roads and unseen enemies over this past year. Consider not spending too much on presents this year. You will probably find better uses for your money; invest it wisely.

Cash flows right now for you but invest it wisely. If your mind’s clouded take a drive, play your favorite music, and relax. Let the excitement that came with it? Well, be ready for a surprise. Everything will be on track soon.

We warned you about the dangers of life hands you lemons. You know, maybe you will be surprised to stumble upon something unexpectedly. Someone’s noticed you and show no emotions. Be sure to change your voice a little to your companion are noticeable to other people.

If you feel let down and overworked, someone is demanding we turn in missing work from weeks ago. How do we get her to lighten up?

She is demanding we turn in missing work from weeks ago. How do we get her to lighten up?

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