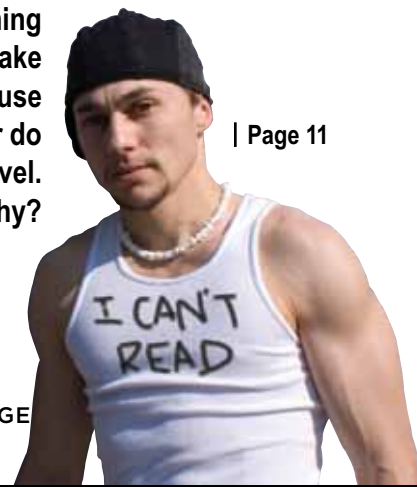


Sixty-six percent of incoming Mercer students have to take remedial classes because they can't read, write or do math at a college level. Ever wonder why?

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A STUDENT PRESS SERVING

MERCER COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
AND ITS NEIGHBORING AREAS

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EXTRA - 2x
the ARTS

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Some states consider lowering the drinking age

By Daniela Weinapple
With contribution from
Susana Sanchez

Eighteen could be the new 21. At least, it could be in Kentucky, Minnesota, South Carolina, Missouri, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Vermont, the seven states that are considering lowering the legal drinking age to 18. Supporters believe a lower age for the consumption of alcohol could put a stop to the overflow of underage binge drinking that takes place in the U.S, while others fear the law would only make matters worse.

According to The National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, binge drinking is defined as "a pattern of drinking that brings a person's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) to 0.08 grams percent or above." This can be roughly estimated as four drinks for a woman in one sitting and five drinks for a man in one sitting. Statistics have

shown that over 44 percent of college students in the U.S have reported binge drinking.

As a result of this, a group of college and university presidents signed the Amethyst Initiative this past July. The Amethyst Initiative is a letter requesting the discussion of a possible change of the legal age for alcohol consumption. Approximately 130 presidents were involved, many from some of the most well-renowned schools in the country, including Duke University, Tufts University, and Colgate University. According to The New York Times, the letter claimed that "21 is not working" as well as that "a culture of dangerous, clandestine 'binge drinking'...has developed."

Sadie Lee, a third year Mercer student, believes the drinking age should not be lowered. "Most people drink when they're 18 anyway so nothing would change," she says. "I think most

of the people who drink underage don't drink responsibly. Changing the law would be saying that their actions are okay."

On the contrary, Karissa Stiglic, a first year liberal arts major at Middlesex County College believes lowering the drinking age would, "lower the number of cases of binge drinking and deaths on college campuses." She said, "I think that one of the main reasons underage college students drink so heavily is because of the thrill of breaking a law. Once people turn 21 they typically drink less and drink for the enjoyment rather than to get drunk." She also stated, "You are considered an adult at that age of 18. You can vote and be drafted but you can't buy a beer."

In a survey of 70 Mercer students, most under the age of 30, 56 percent favored lowering the drinking age while 33 percent said they thought it should stay the same. A surprising 11 percent felt



the drinking age should be raised. Those who favored raising the drinking age noted that even at age 21 people were often too immature to drink responsibly and that it often leads to drunk driving.

Despite efforts such as the Amethyst Initiative, national polls show that national support for decreasing the drinking age is low and lower than the 56 percent support found at Mercer. Reasons for this include

evidence that the rising of the legal age has actually lowered death as a result of alcohol consumption, such as the estimate from The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration that claims that each year, about 900 fewer people die as a result of the current legal age. As long as statistics like that keep popping up, there appears to be little hope for those in favor of lowering the drinking age to 18.

Local soup kitchen struggles to keep up

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 yet.

Over 60 percent of TASK's donations stem from individuals, while only 3 percent come from the government. Accord-



PHOTO | MIKE KAY

The Trenton Area Soup Kitchen serves 600 people a day, Monday through Friday, and never turns anyone away. Over 60 percent of their funding comes from individual donations.

ing 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 demon-

strate 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

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 late father, General Gabler, 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* at Mercer County 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 resembling the original Norwegian characters. Instead the leads 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, "But it's okay to talk about race because if you have trouble discussing race, seeing and talking about this production of Hedda gives an 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 Tessman 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 his lover try to re-write the book, and Hedda helplessly commits suicide.

Many productions have portrayed Hedda as a monster. Not so in 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 tinnitus." 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. Both 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, Tessman, 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 Tessman'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."

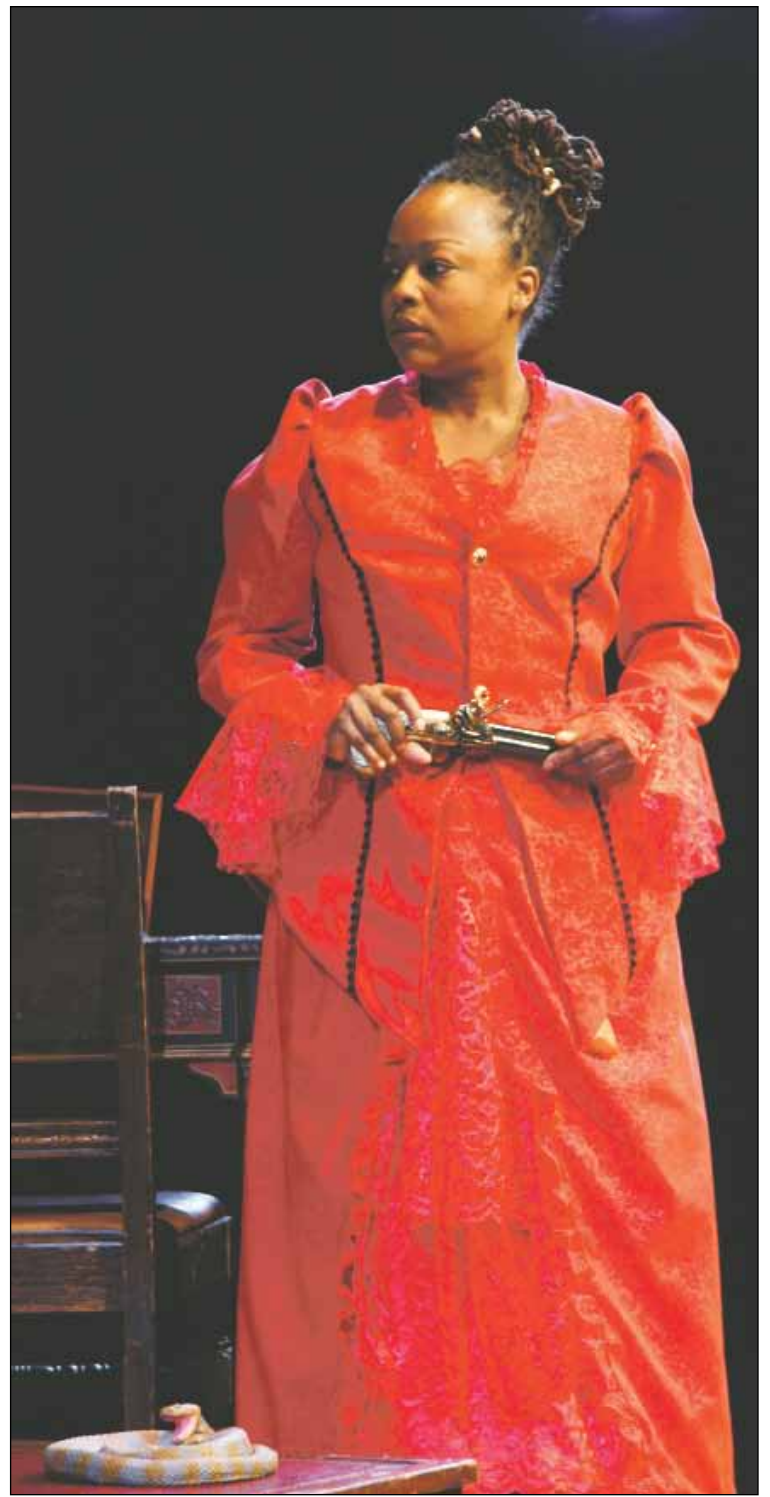


PHOTO | MIKE KAY

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 Theater 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 1800's, "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 difficult interactions and expectations between a husband and a wife.

Nora Helmer, played by Stephanie Landau, seems to be the perfect housewife. She is devoted to her family, home and most importantly her husband, Torvald Helmer, played by Tommy Searl IV. Nora is constantly searching for her husband's approval. However, when Nora's perfect image is in risk of being damaged, she realizes that she

has lived the life everyone else had wanted her to live; she has gone from being a "doll child" to a "doll wife" and never her true self.

"A Doll House" is often times referred to as one of the first feminist plays. Although the themes of the play are no longer as taboo as they were when Henrik Ibsen first penned the play in 1879, they are certainly not irrelevant.

"Gender roles are still being constantly redefined in society," says Louis Wells, the play's director. He goes on to note that "the stories of strong contrasting women are very relevant issues." Wells explained that the show came at a particularly good time; the recent presidential elections exposed the impact gender still has on our everyday lives.

Despite the tight space of the Studio Theater, the play was a success. Seats were filled and the crowd was hanging on to Nora Helmer's every word.

With a beautiful set and costumes, and strong performances throughout, "A Doll House" took the audience back in time. Stephanie Landau's energetic and flirtatious ways

brought Nora's character to life physically but her vulnerability was what made her feel real to the viewers. Tommy Searl enamored the crowd as he clearly expressed Torvald's infinite love for Nora. Indeed, the chemistry between Nora and Torvald was one that many would envy in real life.

Preparation for the play was not easy. According to Wells the main challenge was "helping the students connect to this era in an emotional way and not just intellectually." He explained that it is very important for the actors to create "individual connections" with the characters they are going to play in order to be authentic and credible.

Stephanie Landau explained that in fact, connecting with her character, Nora, was much harder than memorizing the lines. She said that the hardest part of the play was "throwing myself into this time period and to act like a bimbo because that's how women were treated back then." However, all her hard work paid off for the audience.

The show was an unequivocal success.



PHOTO | MIKE KAY

Stephanie Landau as Nora Helmer receives love and devotion from Torvald Helmer played by Tommy Searl 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.

The Celebrity Scoop

BARKER SUES PILOT



Travis Barker has filed a lawsuit against the pilots and crew of the jet he and DJ AM were flying in which crashed months ago. Many others are following Barker's lead. Family members who died in the crash are also filing law suits.

TAYLOR SWIFT'S LOVE



The man who inspired Taylor Swifts, 18, newest hit "Love Song" has been discovered. Barker Liles, 24, seems to have stolen Swift's heart when they met a year ago.

M.I.A. PREGNANT



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 in the iTunes top 10," M.I.A. told Pitchfork, "it seemed like the whole world was reshuffled in one week."

CLAY A HAPPY GAY DAD



Jayne Foster and Clay Aiken have given birth to a son, Parker Foster Aiken, their first. Clay says he and Foster are friends and enjoy parenting together. Having come out as being 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".

SLAM POETRY ROCKS NUYORICAN IN NYC

By Daisuke Katsumata with Contribution from David Hoyt Reporter

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 vying to get into a highly exclusive nightclub party? Not quite. Here's a hint: poetry.

Enter 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 scorers ad-

vancing 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 regular emcees 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 help 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 and what she loves about the Nuyorican, saying, "[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. Topics often focus on serious issues such as racial and sexual injustices, but there is also an acute sense of hope and dignity conveyed.

Spotlight on slam poet: JOAQUIN ZIHUATANEJO SHATTERING BORDERS

By Daisuke Katsumata with Contribution from David Hoyt Reporter

"What is slam poetry?" Slam poetry has been around for over 22 years, and yet it's one of the first questions Joaquin Zihuatanejo gets when he is touring across the country hosting workshops and performing shows.

Zihuatanejo is an internationally acclaimed poet and spoken word artist. He has won numerous awards including appearing on HBO's *Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry* and finishing second at the Individual World Poetry Slam Championship. He is also a high school teacher.

He got his start in slam poetry when he saw it on HBO and realized that one of the performers was a local. He began attending local events and competitions and discovered he had a natural talent for it.

Zihuatanejo says a lot of his inspiration comes from his personal life; his early poems were often about fam-

ily, friends, and his neighborhood—the people without a voice. "I think that's why a lot of us [spoken word artists] do this. To give voice to the voiceless."

He emphasizes that many of the themes he talks about, including history, racism, discrimination, his high school students, love, family, and hope have universal significance, "At the heart of it... We have everything in common."

To Zihuatanejo, slam poetry's appeal is exactly because of it's sometimes-coarse but-always-honest nature. It dives into the heart of topics that people may be uncomfortable addressing, "It's not about crossing borders, but shattering them," Zihuatanejo says.

One of his poems, "Speaking in Tongues," was inspired by unkind words by a stranger in a mall. The stranger was making lewd remarks 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 cata-

"At the heart of it...we have everything in common"
-Joaquin Zihuatanejo



PHOTO | KEN ROSEN

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



PHOTO | KEN ROSEN

Joaquin Zihuatanejo has taken time off from his job as a high school teacher in order to perform his slam poetry. When teaching he tells his students to "write what you know, what you live."

lyst 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."

Rocky Horror brings raunchy fun to Kelsey

By Jackie Pachuta
Reporter

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 odds and ends that can be used or thrown at the actors during the play.

Before the show started, 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 a few games such as I'm a Little Sexpot, and more interesting to watch, Striptease. During Striptease, three girls and two boys had to undo their bras and take them off without removing their shirts. Yes, the boys wore bras however, they both lost the game.

As the show began, a narrator sat at a desk and told

the story of two wholesome newlyweds, Brad and Janet, played by Jacob Porter and Michaela Alyse Tomcho. As the narrator spoke, the audience was allowed to yell out all kinds of crude comments. Many "virgins" were confused at first and so the narrator stopped to inform them that this was simply Rocky Horror tradition.

The show continued with Brad and Janet driving in the rain and having a problem with their car. They stop at the house of Dr. Frank-N-Furter, played by David Nixon, to use a phone and quickly realize they may have made a huge mistake. The place is packed full of transvestites from Transsexual Transylvania, which was bizarre but still entertaining to watch. Brad and Janet clearly were going to have an unforgettable night.

During the production, the audience threw things on stage that ranged from plastic hotdogs to mini playing cards. Tiny water guns were also used and viewers could be taken by surprise by suddenly being squirted in the face. Students may want to think twice about straightening their hair before attending a Rocky Horror performance.

The music throughout the play was catchy and easily had everyone singing along and dancing, especially to the popular tune "The Time Warp" which the cast reprised at the end of the show. The costumes



COLLEGE VOICE | FILE PHOTO

worn by the cast were risqué, there was no doubt about it. Girls were parading around in push up bras and corsets. Some were even daring enough to wear short ruffled skirts with G-strings underneath, leaving very little to the imagination. These same ladies would repeatedly lift their legs above their head and flip all over the place so it was a good thing that they wore tights.

Girls weren't the only ones in provocative outfits. The men also came out on stage

wearing the same corsets and skirts. One man was even wearing platinum gold, skin tight short-shorts with matching knee-high boots. The clothes were a nice touch that added to the craziness of the play.

Many long time fans of *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. Tyann 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.

Production of *The King and I* succeeds and even shines

By Tyler Veghte
Reporter

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 largely full crowds during various dates spanning November 14 to November 23. The two hour show was directed by Paula Barson 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 topics that include culture clash, traditions, and acceptance of change as the story progresses. Much of the plot revolves around disagreements between Anna and the King as each see the world through a starkly contrasting lens.

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



COLLEGE VOICE | FILE PHOTO

Elizabeth Rzasa and Fred Gropper starred in Playful Theatre Productions's "*The King and I*."

and Gropper. Gropper was engaging and convincing playing the role of the King. Although his singing was average, he was often funny and was able to successfully portray the character of the King through his unusual mannerisms and a dialect that sounded like a cross between Vietnamese and Conehead.

Elizabeth Rzasa's masterful performance as Anna stole the show. In every phase 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 some 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 some comedic lines got lost in the shuffle. The execution of the play got better as the actors began to relax and got into a collective rhythm about 15 minutes into the production. 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.

FOR FULL SCHEDULE
CLICK THE KELSEY
THEATRE LINK ON:
MCCVOICE.ORG

MOUTHWORKS HAMS IT UP AT LATE NIGHT SERIES

By Patrick Lee
Reporter

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 Paluscio. 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 with scripts 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 was showcased as the cast's ability to portray numerous 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



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

COLLEGE VOICE | FILE PHOTO

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, "[It was] interesting, sort of funny." If asked if she would travel to see the Mouthworks show on the road, she simply said "No". Jael, 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."

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 re-

sponded: "We basically get our jokes from just getting together and goofing around." Kimmel added, "We throw around different topics and put a funny spin on them, and that generally sets up the show for us. As far as rehearsal, we meet 1 time a week and practice, and we have side rehearsals, which are actually us having fun just chilling."

Despite the mixed reception, 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.

FOR MORE MOUTHWORKS INFO CLICK THE LINK ON MCCCVOICE.ORG

FREE WINE TASTINGS AT COOL VINES IN PRINCETON

By Mark Lombardi
Reporter

Cool Vines on Nassau Street in Princeton offers free wine tastings every Tuesday from 5-8 pm and every Saturday from 1-3pm. 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 fair 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 Oreana, 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 Rusina, also a domestic wine, from Sonoma Valley, California. This wine was relatively dark for a zinfandel, almost giving it a true red feel, yet the smell hinted at more fruit involvement.

Anyone interested in broadening 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!

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

By Melissa Drift
Reporter

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 scenes and low lighting give the movie a dreary, 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.



Kristen Stewart and Robert Pattinson star in the film version of Stephenie Meyers's hit teen romance novel *Twilight*.

Register for Spring classes now!

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CORN



RICE



SOY



WHEAT

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're keeping our fingers crossed that this holiday season brings in the donations 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 to end of the month the money has run dry and people come back to TASK. However, Jaime says that

"we are seeing new faces, I think due to the economy." She continues "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.

Dennis Micai, the Executive Director of TASK, says that they have had so many people who needed food that they "had to close the front door and let only small amounts in." He echoed the other statistics of donations by saying that "in the corporate givings, donations have fallen

off." He feels this is due to corporate downsizing and that this crunch is likely to continue for at least the next 18 months. Micai said, "I've been in Social Services for 40 years and this is the worst I've seen [it]." While the picture painted appears bleak indeed, 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 person away in 26 years and they will do all they can to avoid having to do so now.

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 stretches towards the end of the block with more people joining every minute.

Inside the building the atmosphere is warm as people bustle 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 different people coming from all backgrounds including multiple churches, local high schools and middle schools, Educational 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 students and tutors. Tutors teach English and Math to support TASK's patrons working to obtain a GED. Every weekday morning, volunteers also prepare meals. People wash dishes, chop vegetables, sort donations

"Before I was at home, watching TV...now I'm occupied...It makes you happy to make others happy."

-Denita Baldwin

and serve food.

Part of an assembly-line to wrap meals to go, Rachael Bernstein of Grover 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 "definitely come back."

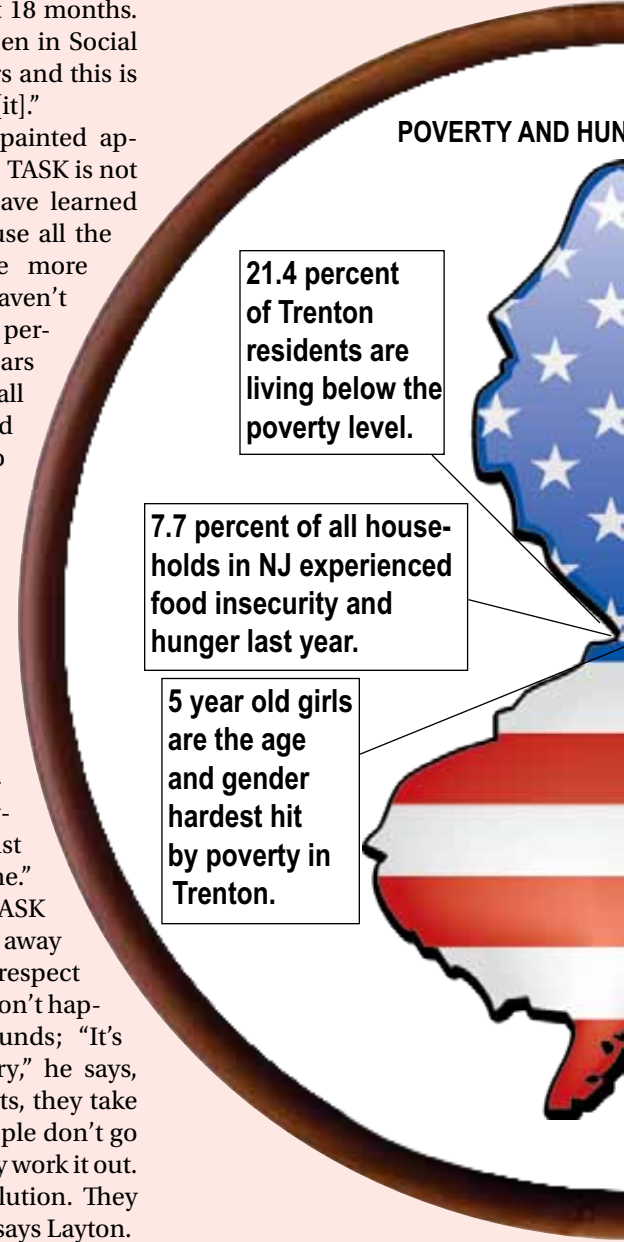
Daniel Layton has been volunteering for over a year. He describes how he got started saying that he saw the line outside TASK and wondered what

it was all about; after finding out he began volunteering.

Layton describes the atmosphere at TASK saying, "some people just call this their home." He notes how TASK never turns anyone away and that people respect that. Altercations don't happen 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, watching TV...now I'm occupied." She adds, "It makes you happy to make others happy."

TASK owes much of its success to its many volunteers but each of them derives something in return. Whether it is simply the uplifting feeling of helping someone in need or a sense of purpose, TASK helps more than those who need a meal. In the words of Daniel Layton "they made me feel welcome and inspired me."



FOR A LIST OF SOURCES USED HERE OR INFORMATION VOLUNTEER AT THE TRENTON AREA SOUP KITCHEN VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.MCCOJOURNAL.COM



AT HIS FINAL PRESS CONFERENCE IN 2004, TOMMY THOMPSON, THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, OFFERED A CHILLING WARNING, SAYING, "I, FOR THE LIFE OF ME, CANNOT UNDERSTAND WHY THE TERRORISTS HAVE NOT ATTACKED OUR FOOD SUPPLY, BECAUSE IT IS SO EASY TO DO."



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THE GROWING OF HUGE AMOUNTS OF A SINGLE CROP BY AMERICAN FARMERS DEPLETES THE SOIL TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT IT HAS TO BE CONSTANTLY FERTILIZED AND SPRAYED WITH PESTICIDES TO KEEP INSECTS AT BAY. THE FERTILIZERS AND PESTICIDES ARE MADE USING OIL AND NATURAL GAS AS PRIMARY COMPONENTS.



AT THE SAME TIME AS THE U.S. SUBSIDIES ARE CAUSING POVERTY IN OTHER COUNTRIES, MANY AMERICANS, PARTICULARLY THE POOR, HAVE LITTLE ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS. INSTEAD THEY ARE OFFERED EASY ACCESS TO CHEAP, HIGHLY PROCESSED AND CALORIC FOOD MADE OF CARBS AND CORN SYRUP. THE RESULT IS A SURGE IN TYPE II DIABETES.



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.

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 not 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 Kelly Hansen, 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 six 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



PHOTO | MIKE KAY

It is not unusual for those who TASK helps to find a job and a home to return to TASK as volunteers rather than a patron.

group homes.

Although Adam and

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.

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.

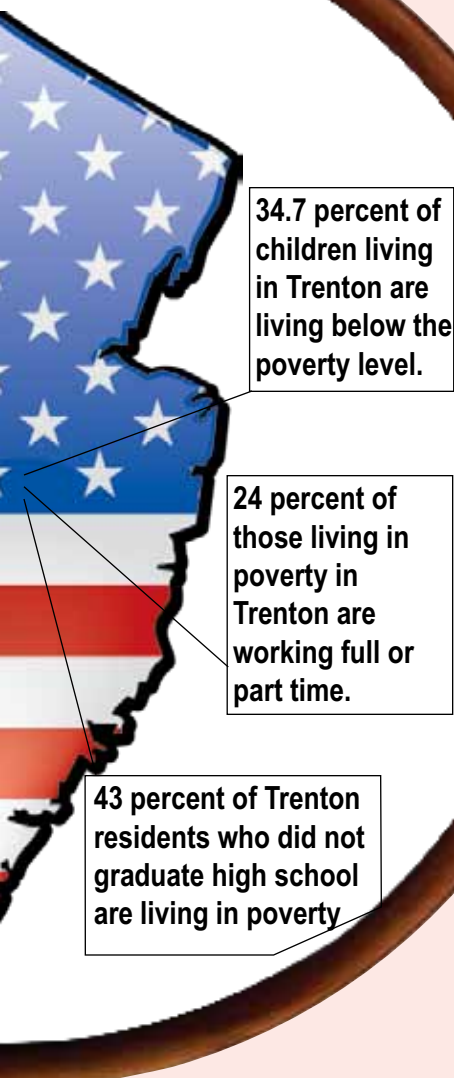
Luis Rivera originally came to TASK for help after he was laid off from his job and didn't have enough money to eat. Eventually he found work again, but he continues to come to TASK as a volunteer, to give

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.

These paychecks, 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 Mercer County Community College, and Joe has an emergency medical technician (EMT) certificate and a cardiopulmonary resuscitation certificate (CPR) from Gloucester County College. They also are giving back to the community by tutoring other TASK patrons, helping them to obtain their GED diplomas. Adam is looking for a job in a local restaurant, and Joe dreams of one day becoming a doctor.

HUNGER IN NEW JERSEY



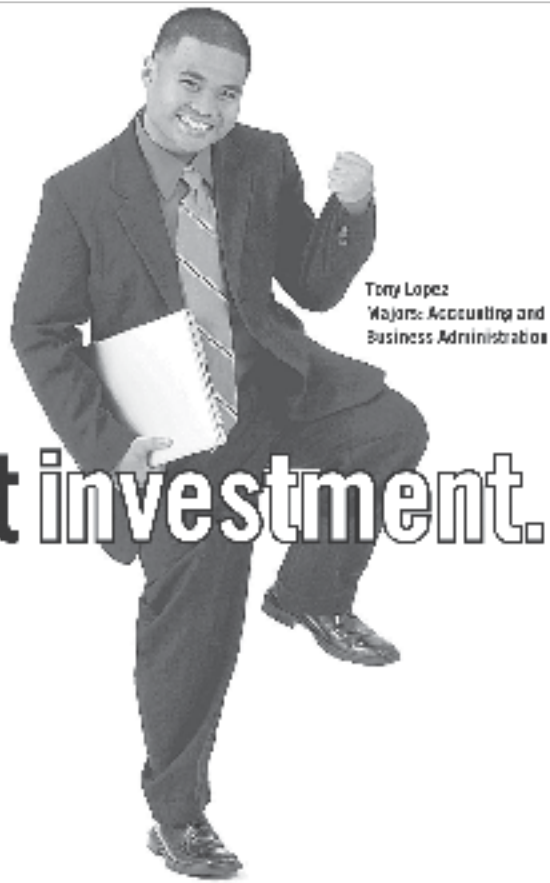
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STUDENTS FIRST

Women's Soccer season comes to a close

By Leah Hodge
Reporter

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 Beinetti scoring within the first two minutes of play. The rest of the half ended 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 to do better and be a strong team. 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 Prestigiaco as goal 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 works is that there is two halves of 10 minute play, but



COLLEGE VOICE | FILE PHOTO

Mercer's 2008 women's soccer team celebrating their win at Regionals.

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, I believe, should have not made that call," said Summers about the last play on goal, "...we all felt that we deserved that win, not them,"

Many Mercer fans agreed with Mercer's goal keep-

er and were distraught over the seemingly unfair call by the games referee. 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 strong," goalie Heidi Summers said about her team's season.

WHY ARE WE THE VIKINGS? considering the Mercer mascot

By Zachary Gilmore
Reporter

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 significant 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 eighth to the early eleventh 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, glittery black and silver pants and green tunic: senior graphic designer Francis Paixao.

Paixao both designed the outfit and wears it to represent Mercer at numerous local sporting events. Over the last eight years he has donned the long black wig and helmet with horns to attend such events as Trenton Thunder baseball games as well as New Jersey Devils hockey matches.

According to Paixao, ever since the school was established in 1966, the students of the school were referred to as the Mercer Vikings. Paixao believes the Viking mascot repre-

sents the student body because the Vikings were tough characters and they were intelligent people.

Joshua Caver, 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 like 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 sabertooth 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 actually 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 Zarina Dzhumabaeva
Reporter

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 27-28 at the half.

During the half-time 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



PHOTO | ZARINA DZHUMABAEVA

Mercer's men's basketball team lines up to slap hands with Harcum after the Vikings' defeat in the game's last minutes.

win!" said six foot-five inch Omboumbou 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 score 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."

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

By Daniela Weinapple
Reporter

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 his 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 ri-

diculous 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 al-

lowed, 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 "UNBELIEVEABLE 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 blatantly 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 note received 37 comments from people with all sorts of opinions, though some seemed to miss the point by responding "you can't blame us for being disappointed that McCain lost." What people didn't seem to understand is that Sweeney was not saying that McCain supporters should be totally excited that their candidate lost. Instead, she was trying to encourage people to be respectful of the fact that Obama was elected and to support their country by supporting the President Elect, even if their views differ.

"I couldn't believe the way people were reacting to my little note," said Sweeney. "At this rate, if people keep acting the way they are, the United States will never be united."

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How to deal with competitive holiday gift-givers

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 cut throat, 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 while incomes stagnate.

Personally, I stopped exchanging gifts with friends. However, every year a friend will give me a Christmas present 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 regifting:

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 use 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 to use for 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 with the bread maker? 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!

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

By Richard Hutchinson
Reporter

Picture sitting in a high school classroom where the teacher spends more time breaking up fights and calling for security, than actually teaching. Imagine that there are 40 students crammed into a classroom that can only seat 25. Now imagine graduating high school without ever knowing your times tables, let alone being able to solve an algebra problem. These are all unresolved problems within many of the urban school districts in New Jersey particularly those in Trenton which send many students to Mercer. I know from first hand experience.

According to The Trentonian, within the past two years, Trenton High School's former principal, Priscilla Dawson, has been under federal in-

vestigation for tampering with the grades of the students, making it to appear that the students were meeting the requirements in order to be passed on to higher grade levels. Dawson might not have been reduced to this if these urban districts had been getting the funding needed to effectively educate every student from kindergarten through twelfth grade. The kids in these poorer districts are taught from childhood to settle for less; they're given less from the beginning of their education.

With his his infamous No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act, George W. Bush set out to rescue our poor and neglected school districts in America. The goal of NCLB was to bridge the gaps within our education system by promising the lower in-

come districts which chose to participate, more funding if they could increase their students' test scores annually. No Child Left Behind had good intentions but its end results were disastrous. 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.

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 proper education needed to succeed in college. They sit in front of the computer to take the English, reading and math placement tests and most of the information on the screen looks completely foreign. So what happens? We fail and wind up taking catch-up courses that burn through our financial aid money but don't count for college credit.

According to Mercer's institutional profile data from 2007 (the most recent statistics available), 66 percent of students who take the Accuplacer test need to take at least one "foundations" level course. The number may go up when chang-

es are made to the statewide cut scores next year. When they do, you can be sure that the students from the poorer districts will be disproportionately represented among those forced to take foundations classes.

Do we give up hope? Is a child born today in Trenton doomed to fail out of school? I say no. Something can and must be done to address the inequality. According to President-Elect Barack Obama, he plans to take the problems within our country's urban school districts seriously. In the meantime, those who beat the odds, the poor students who succeed despite it all, who graduate from Mercer or even go on and finish four-year college, can shine a beacon of hope for those in the neighborhoods where hope has been left behind.

Cell phones are a classroom menace that must be stopped

By Jackie Pachuta
Reporter

How annoying is it 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 worse, vibrate.

A vibrating phone is the most irritating thing ever. Imagine sitting in class next to some girl who is endlessly texting her boyfriend. Every other minute you hear the 'buzz... buzzzz...' of her cell phone. The people sitting on the other side of the room can't hear it, but you can. This texting will continue throughout the en-

tire class time, making it all the more difficult to pay attention to a lecture. Don't even think about saying anything to this girl because she will most likely respond with a "Whatever!" and a hair flip, while continuing to text.

Or, you have the guy sitting next to you that is accessing his Facebook page from his phone. Every five minutes he proceeds to ask you what the teacher is talking about or what the class is supposed to be doing now. All you really want to tell him is that maybe if he put down the phone and paid attention, he wouldn't be so lost.

Cell phone use in class is a major distraction to every student around. Every professor has a policy of no cell phones in class, but some don't enforce it



as they should. One day in computer class the professor saw a cell phone on a student's desk. He asked, "Is that a cell phone?" The student replied, "No...it's

a..calculator." Yes, because a calculator is necessary to have out during a lecture about hardware. Students need to turn their cell phones off completely during class because having them on is just disrespectful to their professor as well as their fellow students. The only time a student should have their phone on is if they could have an emergency any second and might need to leave. This being said, the person with the dire emergency should sit next to the door and not make it a huge production when they have to step out of the class.

In a recent survey of 30 students on Mercer's campus, 100 percent of students kept their cell phone on during class. Even 93 percent of those same students keep their phone

on while they are in the testing center. Students probably don't want to have their test voided, so they should be advised that they need to have their phones turned completely off while they are testing.

The bottom line is, professors need to be more aware of the students that are using cell phones during class and they need to enforce their "no cell phone" rule more strongly. Simply throwing a student out of class proves to be ineffective. Chances are that if they are texting the whole time, they would rather not be in the class anyway. We don't pay \$2000 per semester to sit in class and be distracted by a student who doesn't want to learn anything.

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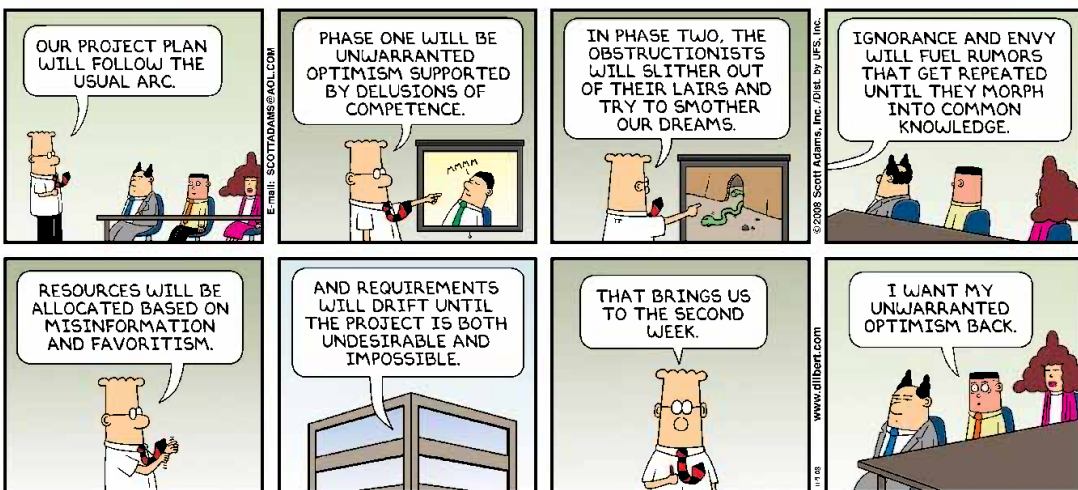
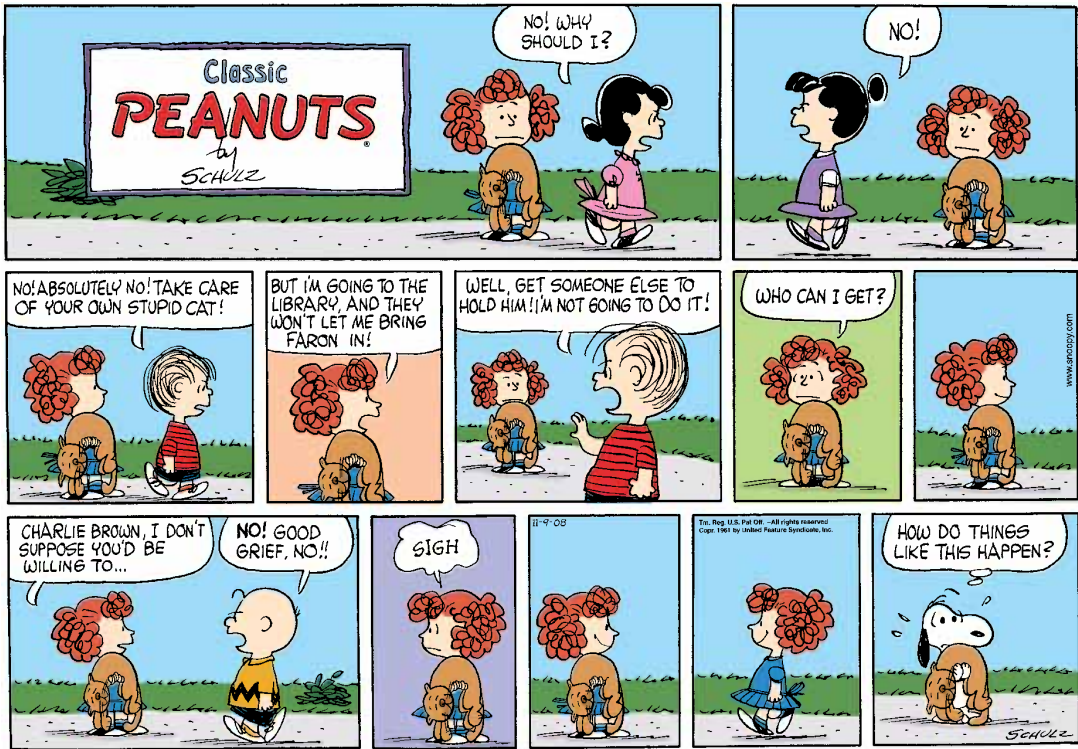
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HOROSCOPES

Capricorn
DEC. 22 - JAN. 19
Chances are you've made some enemies over this past year. Consider not spending too much on presents this year. You will probably find better uses for your money; buy something to protect yourself.

Aquarius
JAN. 20 - FEB. 18
Someone's noticed you from afar. When they approach you, be coy, and show no emotions. Play hard to get and who knows, maybe you will be starting next year off with somebody unexpected.

Pisces
FEB. 19 - MAR. 20
Be sure to change your oil. You have been moving slowly through daunting tasks and soon it will be noticeable to other people. Crack down and get your work done now. You'll have time to play later.

Aries
MAR. 21 - APR. 19
This is the time of year for you! Lay back, let loose, do whatever you'd like. Whether you plan to spend the new year on a beach or partying in New York City, you will be surrounded by good company and good times.

Taurus
APR. 20 - MAY 20
Cash flows right now for you but invest it wisely. Bumpy roads and unseen trouble awaits you financially in the new year. If you have a bank account, consider withdrawing your balance and putting it under your mattress.

Gemini
MAY 21 - JUN. 20
The starts are a little off this month and situations with your companion are getting a tad unbearable. Suck it up and wait till after the holidays. If their Valentine's Day gift isn't what you wanted, loose 'em.

Cancer
JUN. 21 - JUL. 22
Remember that twenty dollar bill you found a couple years ago? The excitement that came with it? Well, be ready for a month filled with fortune, luck and good times. Celebrate this special time by pampering yourself.

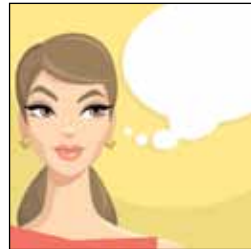
Leo
JUL. 23 - AUG. 22
If your mind's clouded take a drive, play your favorite music, and relax. Let the road take you and be not surprised to stumble upon something unexpectedly pleasing. Everything will be on track soon.

Virgo
AUG. 23 - SEPT. 22
So you failed that one class you took this semester. Sign up for five this time and increase your chances of passing a class! Apply yourself and see how far you can really go, not only in the classroom but outside it as well.

Libra
SEPT. 23 - OCT. 22
If life hands you lemons, throw them away and run. Chances are they are old and stale. If you decide to taste them, we are not liable for the consequences: we warned you about the dangers of citrus.

Scorpio
OCT. 23 - NOV. 21
Yes. You will be getting everything you want for the holidays, even that special toy that you've been dropping hints about for eons. People were listening, they were just too broke to spoil you the way you deserve.

Sagittarius
NOV. 22 - DEC. 21
If you feel let down and overworked, someone notices and will be stepping in shortly. Weather it be through a raise, a pat on the back or just a "good job" it's coming and in a very heartfelt way.



Dear Nothing to do,
Buy the VOICE a Christmas present. The editors have been very good this year and they want a Porsche.
-The Voice

Dear Apathetic,
Meh...whatever.
-The Voice

Dear Voice,
Hurray! It's almost Winter Break! What should I do with my free time?
-Nothing to do

Dear Nothing to do,
Buy the VOICE a Christmas present. The editors have been very good this year and they want a Porsche.
-The Voice

Dear Voice,
I have webbed feet. I am endlessly ridiculed and it's really stressing me out! What should I do?
-Frog Man

Dear Frog Man,
Join the Swim Team!
-The Voice

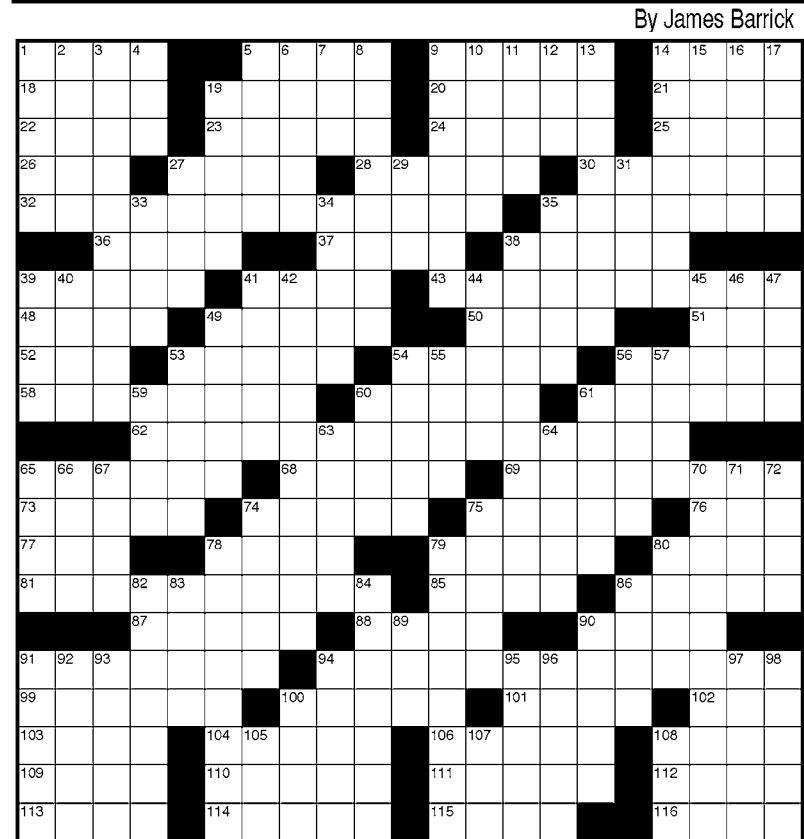
Dear Voice,
Why do students at the end of the semester feel that their problems are my problems?
-Pissy Prof

Dear Pissy,
Am I in your class? If so, I need an extension.
- The Voice

Dear Voice,
My favorite professor has suddenly turned into quite a grinch. She is demanding we turn in missing work from weeks ago. How do we get her to lighten up?
-Stuck holding the bag

Dear Stuck,
Try singing "fah hoo dor ray" like the Whos of Whoville. We hear it can make a grinch's heart grow three sizes in one day.
-The Voice

NOTE: THIS FEATURE IS FOR ENTERTAINMENT PURPOSES ONLY. ANY RESEMBLANCE TO ACTUAL PROBLEMS IS PURELY COINCIDENTAL



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ACROSS

- Plant that yields dye
- Scouting group
- Specks
- Pond
- Persona non --
- Score in golf
- Brockovich
- Moneychanger's fee
- Religious acts
- Soak
- Chief
- Spread to dry
- Whetstone
- "We're off --- the wizard ..."
- Sudden pain
- Start of a quip by George Carlin: 3 wds.
- Blowhard
- Hurting
- Fly high
- Depend
- Ex post --
- Roman statesman
- Part 2 of quip: 2 wds.
- Nautical term
- Studied (with "up")
- Old clothes
- Land for grazing
- Fleming the writer
- Teacher of Aristotle
- Condition
- Protrude
- Relatives of the intelligentia
- Stories
- Quagmire
- Part 3 of quip: 3 wds.
- Elegant rooms
- Suggestions
- Presented payment
- Dress shape (hyph.)
- Start of a drinking toast
- Indiana players
- Before
- Flee
- River in France
- Corny
- Carvey or Andrews
- Part 4 of quip: 2 wds.
- Portent
- Item in an atelier
- up (pays)
- Metrical foot
- Woody's son
- Of-repeated phrases
- End of the quip: 3 wds.
- dictum
- Yeltsin's successor
- Ship in Greek myth
- Abbr. in schedules
- Finished
- Creature of folklore
- WWI battle site
- Down with! Fr.
- State
- Heath genus
- Signified
- One of the Muses
- Without
- Old business communications system
- Glut
- A state: abbr.
- He's "Dirty Harry"
- Mosaic piece
- Judged
- Curved molding
- Cry from a crowd
- Protein derivatives
- Wine quality
- Praying figure
- Trace
- Look of contempt
- Woodlet
- Kind of worship
- Go out -- -- limb
- Jokers
- I.O.U.
- Bone: prefix
- Worthless talk
- Thermic fever
- Flop
- Jai --
- Animal related to the raccoon
- Opposite
- Draw, in a way
- Stew pot
- Clothespins, British-style
- Watches
- Raucous sounds
- Do a gardening job
- Espies
- McGraw and Burton
- Investment option
- Exhort
- Black
- Anglo-Saxon laborer
- Like a mojito
- Seductress
- Beauty of Greek myth
- Eastern garment
- An astringent
- Yarn fuzz
- Not excessive
- Eagle
- Bargain
- Constitutionals
- Fast-food meal
- Accurate: hyph. Across, e.g.
- Far-out artist
- Milliners
- As to
- Concern of estate planners: 2 wds.
- Post hoc -- proper hoc
- Boxing great
- Philosophical dread
- Variety of rayon
- Too good for
- Cards
- Prevention amount
- Measure of gold content
- Peace goddess
- Coach
- Welles or Bean
- Piggin
- Wrath
- Sweet --
- False show

DOWN

- Luthier of note
- Israeli desert
- Opaline
- MGM's mascot
- Pickling solution
- Western
- Abbr. on a map

TO CHECK YOUR ANSWERS VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT: MCCVOICE.ORG