



Checking up on a check mark school

By Alexandra Brown

For many students at BFA St. Albans, the NECAP, an assessment that measures the academic performance and progress of public schools under the No Child Left Behind Act, is a mandatory ritual of their junior year. They take the test in the mornings and get a welcome afternoon for themselves. After mid-October, many do not consider how the test affects their daily lives and education. However, this year, the yearly assessment carried new weight. BFA's performance on the 2010 assessment identified it as a school that did not meet Adequate Yearly Progress objectives for Math and Reading for all students. BFA is currently in year one of the school improvement stage School Improvement on the Improvement Continuum.

The intent of the No Child Left Behind Act is to insure that all students are performing at a proficient level by 2014. This goal has increased the "target" for progress that students must reach according to Assistant Principal Linda Keating. She stresses, "It didn't mean our students weren't improving, it just meant they weren't improving at the rate the target moved up. So we do have to be more aggressive about our improvement now because that high target lasts for three years."

BFA Principal Dennis Hill echoes this sentiment; "It's not the students' fault that we're a checkmark school. It's a combination of variables that formed the perfect storm of not meeting our Adequate Yearly Progress."

The NECAP assessment impacts BFA year-round. Keating stated, "The test results and the analysis of those test results affect curriculum, assessment and instruction in pretty much every classroom." In order to progress and increase the number of students who score proficiently on the NECAP, BFA's School Improvement Team has established two School-wide Improvement Goals: "students can analyze complex, real-world scenarios and can use knowledge and skills across the curriculum to interpret and solve problems," and "students can read closely and critically to comprehend a range of increasingly complex informational texts across the curriculum."

BFA teachers are currently working to apply these goals in their classrooms to help students develop critical thinking and analytical skills which students can use to be successful on the NECAP assessment as well their course work at BFA.

Keith Carlton, the department chair for BFA's English department, stated that the English department, "went back and looked at the results from the previous three testing years."

The department identified, "what standards, essentially what areas students did not seem to have a command of." Carlton stated, "We are trying to see how we can augment or simply tweak our curriculum a little bit." While educators are altering curriculum to make sure that topics that appear on the NECAP are covered adequately in class, they

are not seeking to "teach to the test."

"If changing what we do wouldn't benefit our students, then we wouldn't do it," Carlton explained.

In the math department, the Common Local Assessment is also "tak[en] into consideration" according to Richard Berthiaume, department chair. This test is administered in each math course four times a year and charts "growth and how well the students do throughout the year."

The math department alters the curriculum using the results of both tests to accurately measure and strengthen the instruction of the areas where students struggle.

Some educators believe that the NECAP is not the most accurate indicator available to measure the progress of students because it is administered once and a variety of factors can affect student performance.

Poverty is a major factor that inhibits students from performing up to their full potential on the test according to Hill. "If you think about the connection between a family that is struggling financially and struggling to put food on the table, to ask that kid to come in later in the day and do well on a test doesn't make a lot of sense," he stated.

Hill stated the NECAP therefore, "places undue emphasis on factors that are often out of control of the school." He believes that BFA's status as a check mark school has been "detrimental to the psyche of the school and community."

Franklin Central Supervisory Union Superintendent Bob Rosane states that the NECAP, "is important



Ross and Swezy exchange vows at the Moose Meadow Lodge

Vermont says, "I do!"

By Sarah Crispell

On Tuesday Sep 20, 2011, Navy officer Gary Ross and his partner of 11 years got married at midnight. Gary, 33, and civilian Dan Swezy, 49, flew from Tucson, Ariz. to Duxbury, Vt. to make it official at the Moose Meadow Lodge.

The Moose Meadow Lodge hosted the first gay wedding in 2009 and is about 15 miles northwest of Montpelier. The newlyweds chose Vermont because it's in an Eastern Time zone, it would give them the chance to marry as soon as the law was repealed according to the Los Angeles Times. "We feel that it's important that as soon as we're allowed to commit to each other that we do... It's important not to hide anymore." Ross explained before the ceremony.

Also it was the first state to allow gays to enter civil unions and it is one of six states to legalize same sex marriage.

There are an estimated 65,000 gay members in the military at this time. Because Don't Ask, Don't Tell was repealed, all the service members that were forced out because of their sexual orientation can reenlist into the military. However, there is no guarantee that their service will reenlist them because recruiting has become difficult with the terrible economy.

All the investigations or inquiries of a service member's sexual orientation will end because of the repeal.

There are still problems with the benefits for the partners of the service members. The partners will not be able to live on base if the service member is deployed or be able to access family support groups.

Ross explained his view of Don't Ask, Don't Tell before it was repealed, "It requires you to lie several times a day, being in the military is extremely invasive. It becomes a web of excuses you make when you try to be as honest as possible but you can't be honest. It becomes difficult to trust someone you can't be honest with."

Hungry, hungry high-schoolers

By Mercury Staff

The lunch system has been greatly affected by the new daily schedule this year. A likely cause of the cafeteria overcrowding is that the Northwest Technical Center students have been integrated with the rest of BFA during the first lunch period. In recent years, the Tech students have used the cafeteria before "first lunch."

With the change this year, all of the morning Tech Center students are distributed throughout the four periods of lunch, but all of the afternoon Tech Center students have first lunch. The Tech Center was not responsible for the new change.

"We're actually not sure why the change even happened," said Susan Bosland, guidance coordinator for the Tech Center.

There is a possible short-term solution to the overcrowding. The Tech Center has a culinary program where students cook food in their own restaurant, called the Hideaway. BFA students can go in and be served dishes prepared by Culinary chef-students.

"Students can come in and be served and fed by other students who prepared and cooked the food. There will also sometimes be a buffet, where students can help themselves," said Leeann Wright, the new Coordinator of the Technical Center. Having the Hideaway up and running has the potential to form a win-win situation; it should create less crowding in the cafeteria, and bring more opportunities for the culinary students to further their real-life skills.

A little H.E.L.P from my friends

By Connor Hoben

Cierra Ford, a sophomore at BFA, created a fundraiser called H.E.L.P. (Hand in Extra Loose Pocket change). She raised \$1,600 which went to the Disaster Relief Fund in Stratton, VT.

The money was distributed to people who were hit hardest by Hurricane Irene which struck Vermont in late August.

The fundraiser was created to help make a difference in the community. "The flooding in Southern Vermont was all over the news, and I decided to do something about it. I remembered Penny Wars, a fundraiser we did at Georgia school, and I thought it would be cool to do something similar at BFA," said Ford.

Ford went to her adviser and explained what she wanted to do and scheduled an appointment with Mr. Hill. She discussed with him her idea of the fundraiser. "I just told him about my idea

and he helped out with some of the details for the planning" explained Ford.

Mr. Hill allowed Ford to hang up posters, decide where the money was going to go and let the advisories know about the fundraiser. She was

Teachers were also in on the idea. "Most teachers were impressed with my work and wanted the students to get involved with the fundraiser" said Ford.

The fundraiser became a competition to see which class could raise the most money. While the whole school contributed, the sophomore class was able to collect the most money.

There were other people involved in making this fundraiser possible. Sophomore Katelyn Parah helped create the fundraiser and make posters. Freshman Jilian Berno asked local stores to help in the fundraiser and raise more money overall. A few members of the JV girls' soccer team also contributed, making desserts for the winning advisory.

"I am very happy with all of the money that we raised in the fundraiser," explained Ford.



A road in Southern Vermont Flooded by Hurricane Irene

also in charge of counting the money afterward. Mr. Hill was willing to help Ford have success in the project.

"Mr. Hill motivated me and boosted my confidence for the project."

Exam question finally answered

By Nicholas Rojas

Due to the changes this year in BFA's exam schedule, many students, faculty and parents are left wondering about the exact changes and reasons for the changes to the tradition. To put these questions to rest, the most important difference this year is the lack of exams. Basically, there will be no true exams in the middle of, and at the end of, this school year.

As the new principal of Bellows Free Academy Dennis Hill wants to bring some new traditions and changes to BFA. When asked if this was only part of even more new changes Hill stated "There may be more changes into the future." His new position as principal has been a positive change so far into the school year, with Hill saying there were "no complaints" to be heard of so far. When asked if there was a particular reason for this year being the year to try out this new system, Hill simply laughed and said "because its my first year as principal."

Superintendent Bob Rosane believes the two weeks spent on "ongoing formative assessment", or classes as the majority of us call them, will be significant for the average BFA student, saying

that teachers and students complain about not having enough time in the school year, but these added two weeks will "add 5 percent more school time."

Mr. Hill felt it was time for some change, stating how "the way I was taught in school is not necessarily the way you'll need to be taught." Considering how the world works nowadays, especially with the work force requiring different expectations of adults. Hill, Rosane and Director of Curriculum Linda Keating said "no" when asked if they knew when BFA started to use the two week exam system.

To those who say that students need mid-terms and final exams to prepare for college, Mr. Hill said he believed teachers could provide enough learning and education to prepare students without needing to take the two weeks off of the school schedule.

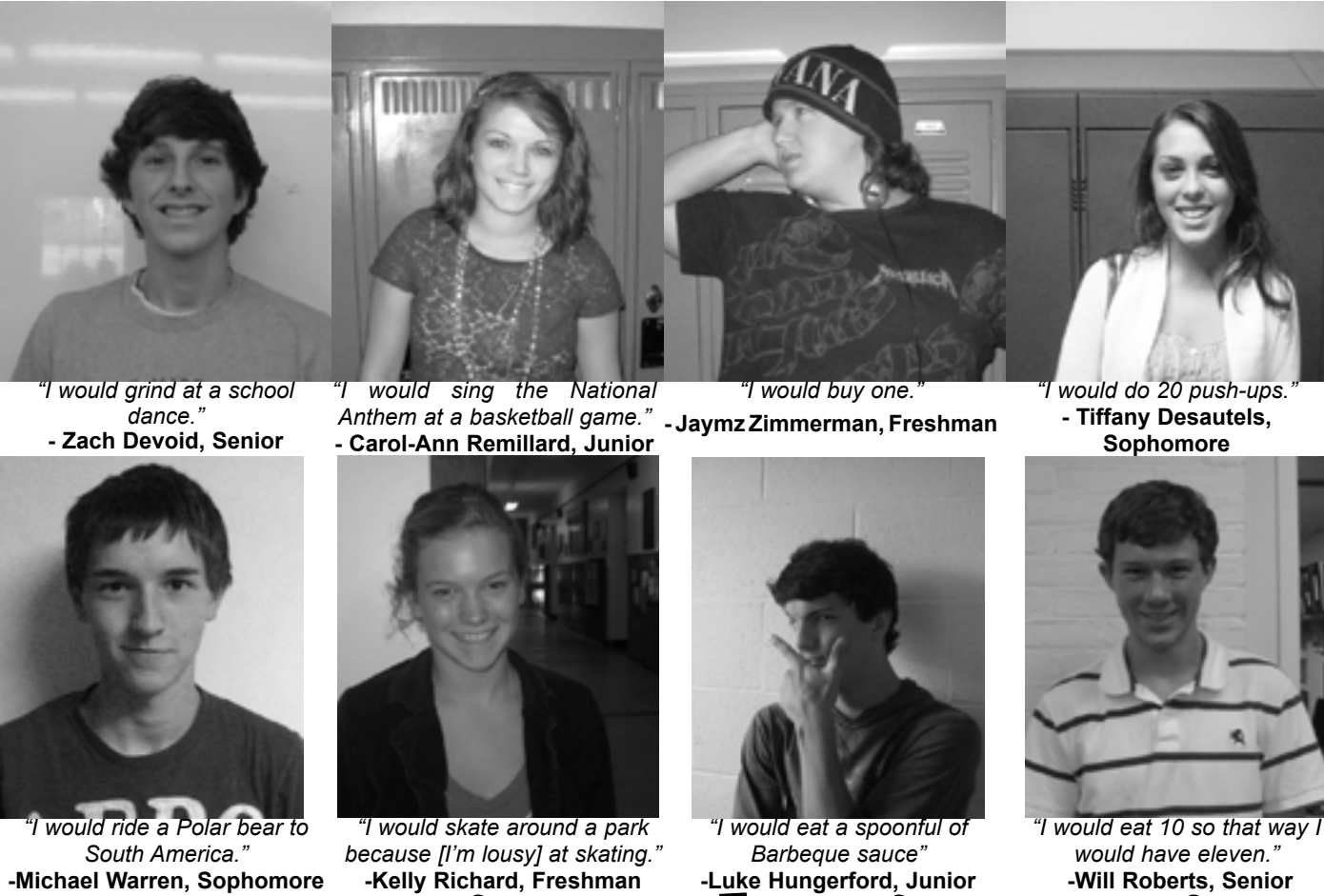
Keating, Rosane and Hill all believe these two weeks added to the school year will positively affect every BFA student, with extra time being given to them to further their education instead of going over things they already know for exams. Mr. Rosane said that BFA is "one of the top high schools in the state," and that these changes will be significant.

Perspectives

Kids in the hall

by Connor Duquette

A variety of students from around campus were asked the following question: "What would you do for a Klondike bar?" These are some of their responses:



"I would grind at a school dance."
- Zach Devoid, Senior

"I would sing the National Anthem at a basketball game."
- Carol-Ann Remillard, Junior

"I would buy one."
- Jaymz Zimmerman, Freshman

"I would do 20 push-ups."
- Tiffany Desautels, Sophomore

"I would ride a Polar bear to South America."
- Michael Warren, Sophomore

"I would skate around a park because [I'm lousy] at skating."
- Kelly Richard, Freshman

"I would eat a spoonful of Barbeque sauce"
- Luke Hungerford, Junior

"I would eat 10 so that way I would have eleven."
- Will Roberts, Senior

Our pain, their gain

by Brandi LaBounty

Businesses struggle to stay open, gas prices remain close to \$3.50 a gallon and St. Albans decides that now is the time to install parking meters. Local businesses scramble month to month to make ends meet, as the economic downturn continues to affect individuals. "I'm concerned for the library, as most of our visitors are elderly or families with small children; they may not have pocket change readily available," stated Mary-Pat Larabee of the St. Albans Free Library; located on Maiden Lane, St. Albans, where they have set the rate at 50 cents.

The economy has been affecting families and businesses for some time now; which constitutes why

parking meters were brought up in the first place. The need to procure the funds for the town to keep businesses open has become a top priority, where extremes must be taken. The reasoning behind the actions are understandable, the solution to the problem however may simply cause more issues. Businesses may be affected negatively in the efforts of a positive solution. The goal to derive more income for the town may indeed have an opposite affect, as struggling families won't be able to justify buying luxury items when having to pay for parking as well as the what it is they are looking for.

Students as well are strongly impacted by installation of parking

meters. Campus parking is unavailable to BFA students, with the amount of space that faculty parking takes up. Therefore students park on Fairfield St., Main St., Church St., and Lincoln Ave. With hourly or semi-hourly rates, students will have an extremely difficult time parking anywhere near campus. To continue to park on these frequent streets, students would be forced to do what? Stand up in the middle of class, and ask the teacher if he or she can go pay their parking meter?

Intentions may be good, but honestly, let's think about the whole picture before coming to such extreme solutions.

A word from our principal

A few years ago I was working in the barn behind my house when a small shiny object caught my eye. Upon closer examination I discovered a hummingbird caught in a spider's web. I hated to deprive the spider of what was certainly an epic feast, but I rescued the bird and ever so carefully carried him in my hand to the front of the house. I whispered to my wife what I had and she came closer to see. I opened my hands and for a moment the tiny creature just sat there. Probably exhausted from his battle with the web, and terrified by the predicament he found himself in at the moment. A few seconds later his wings buzzed and he lifted up and out of my cupped hands. Lingered for a second, I marveled at the incredible beauty, frailty and yet incredible strength that this tiny bird possessed. A moment later it was gone.

Being principal at BFA is strangely similar to this experience. Understanding the strength and beauty of this wonderful school, but being constantly aware of the complexity and fragile nature of the system, is an exhilarating opportunity. Having been here in a different capacity for the past five years has given me an incredible awareness of the dedication and commitment of our faculty and staff, and the incredible talent and brilliance of our students.

BFA is a school of choice in this part of the state. The opportunities available for students are second to none, and our record of academic excellence is common knowl-

edge. As the world around us continues to change, schools too must begin to shift their focus, and look for new and engaging ways to prepare students for the myriad choices and challenges that await them when they leave the hallowed halls of "The Academy." Transformation and innovation are words that have become part of the school conversation locally, at the state level and even nationally. I have been meeting with representatives from the Vermont Department of Education, legislators, college and university representatives, parents and most importantly, students, to look for new and exciting challenges for every member of the BFA community. With the assistance of funding provided through a grant received from the League of Innovative Schools, BFA has begun to explore different ways to customize learning opportunities for students. This exciting work will continue to unfold, and more information will be forthcoming.

As the leaves turn and winter is close on the heels of fall, every member of the BFA community is working hard to continue to make BFA the school of choice in northwest Vermont. It is my belief, however, that with time, BFA's growth and commitment to finding appropriate learning opportunities for each student will show the rest of Vermont that BFA is truly a premiere high school, and not just a regional standout.

- Dennis M. Hill, Principal

Grinding comes to a halt

by Jake Tuttle-Covillon

In the 1960s, a new and exciting dance spread across the country. It was called "The Twist." Young people everywhere would twist the night away while older critics fumed that the dance was extremely provocative and should be banned. Today, we are faced with the same situation, except with the act of "grinding." In the words of famed YouTube blogger Jenna Marbles, grinding is simply having "fake sex" with another person to the beat of the music.

For quite some time, the act of grinding has been noticed at BFA school dances. Not all students participate, but about 90% of the attendees do. Last year, it was enforced that at school dances, referees would watch students dance and if they believed it got too out of hand, they would go over to the students and take care of the situation in a comical matter. This year, the new BFA principal, Dennis Hill has totally banned the act. "[We must] remind students that there is an appropriate level of decorum that must be exhibited in public places," states Mr. Hill.

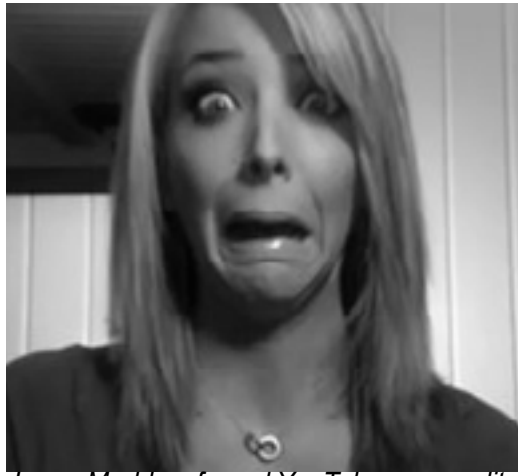
Many students have chosen to backlash and start boycotting dances all together. Some have even gone to the extent of stating that they will not attend the

school prom, but have one of their own. When given the news of the talk going around the student body, Mr. Hill simply said, "Well, that's their choice and that would be unfortunate because prom is a really important and fun part of high school. If kids are going to decide to boycott dances because they think it's going to hurt me some how, [in the end] it is just going to hurt them."

So what is the big deal about grinding being banned? Is it really necessary to boycott dances and have an anti-

fine without rubbing our genitalia on another person. Sure, it may be a generation gap that is causing this, but imagine yourself as a teacher. You teach kids every day and you help them grow into young adults, kind of like a second parent. Then one night you decide to chaperone a dance and BAM, your favorite student is basically fornicating with another student, just with their clothes on.

As you can imagine, that could be very uncomfortable. Some say "well, it's not about them. Dances are for students, not for adults." Wrong. The dances wouldn't be occurring if these staff members were not taking time out of their personal schedules to chaperone us, as we learned the hard way from the cancellation of the Homecoming Dance. Basically what I am saying here is that you can still attend a school dance, be classy, and have loads of fun. I can say from personal experience that I have been to many dances where grinding was banned and I had more fun at those dances than at the ones where grinding was allowed. If you want to grind, save it for your house and show your parents your hot dance moves. I'm sure they will love them.



Jenna Marbles, famed YouTube personality, shows how to get people to stop grinding with you.

prom? I say we just dance without grinding and have just as much fun as we did before. I'm not saying that I don't grind, I am merely saying that it should not be as big of a deal as it is now that it has been banned. We all know in the back of our minds that we can dance perfectly

"Schweddy Balls" causes discomfort

by Hattie Pipes

Ben and Jerry's has recently created a new flavor of ice cream based upon a 1999 Saturday Night Live skit. The name? Why none other than "Schweddy Balls." In the SNL skit "Pete Schweddy" (played by Alec Baldwin) a small bakery owner, is being interviewed by two female "National Public Radio" talk show hosts. During the skit "Margret Jo McCullen" and "Terry" compliment "Mr. Schweddy's" balls. He tells the women he makes, "popcorn balls, cheese balls, rum balls, balls for every taste." Apparently riveted by the performance, Ben and Jerry's came up with the name "Schweddy Balls" in order to honor Baldwin's act. The ice cream was first introduced to stores earlier this summer and has not yielded much success. There are two reasons for "Schweddy Balls" unexpected failure: taste and tackiness. The flavor is a vanilla base with two kinds of balls: chocolate covered rum and milk balls. Huffingtonpost.com conducted a taste test in which "Schweddy Balls" was reported to be less than satisfying. "The flavor is not nearly as exciting as the name" according to huffingtonpost.com it was "less rummy than originally expected" and "the freezing of a malt ball is... a weird

texture." The other reason why "Schweddy Balls" is unpopular is somewhat evident, people find the name offensive. However, when students and BFA staff members were asked of their opinions of the name "Schweddy Balls" the results were mostly positive. "Hilarious," said Lindsay Gardner, "Suggestive" commented Leslie Roberts with a shy smile and "Different" Peggy Goldsbury reported with a pleasant demeanor. Despite the local opinions on "Schweddy Balls," "onemillionmoms" (an affiliate of the "American Family Association") boycotted the production and distribution of "Schweddy Balls." The association argued that the name was "Vulgar" and "Tasteless." Alec Baldwin responded by reporting faux news of a retaliatory flavor called "Go fudge yourself" for those disapproving of "Schweddy Balls." Ben and Jerry's, attempting to remain neutral during the conflict insisted, "We're not trying to offend people. Our fans get our humor." When questioned on "onemillionmoms" reaction "[The parents took it to the] next level; Ben and Jerry's has always been a socially conscious company," stated BFA secretary, Peggy Goldsbury.



Shannon takes a taste of Baldwin's "Schweddy Balls" in the classic Saturday Night Live skit.

Bellows Free Academy Mercury

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Feature

Academy additions



English teacher, Erin Bancroft (above)
English teacher, Lauren Conte (below)



by Desiree Hurlbut

Bellows Free Academy is welcoming four new teachers to the community this year. This includes three English teachers, Erin Bancroft, Lauren Conte, and Mary Ellen Tourville, and one spanish teacher, Katherine Morten.

Bancroft teaches sophomore, junior, and senior English classes here at BFA. Bancroft has previously worked at Montpelier and Hartford high schools and as a school librarian. While she was still in high school she was able to go on a field trip to Disney World with her friends.

At first, Bancroft did not want to become a teacher because there were already so many in her family, but after majoring in English as an undergrad, she then continued on to graduate school for teaching. Bancroft says that at BFA there is "a lot of school pride" and that a lot of the students are very "inquisitive" and "respectful." She hopes to continue teaching here until her retirement.

Conte teaches two foundation lit classes and an expository writing class. Conte is a graduate of BFA, and it is also her first permanent position as a teacher. Her father, who was also a teacher, was an influence to her desire to become one as well, stating that she had "always looked up to the relationships he had with his students." Since returning to BFA, Conte has seen the different changes and the school spirit here. She wanted to be a teacher here because, "it felt like home and I wanted to come back." Also, Conte was a part of the first girls lacrosse team to make it into the semi finals for BFA.



English teacher, Mary Ellen Tourville (above)
Spanish teacher Katherine Morten (below)



Tourville teaches Sophomore and Junior classes here at BFA. Tourville says that calling BFA, "The Academy" fits for the atmosphere of the school because of the students' desire to learn, saying that one could not find that true with many high schools. Tourville taught at Colchester for five years and Essex for ten and she hated high school, especially English. Although, Tourville took one specific class in college that made her want something different for other students, so she decided to teach. Tourville finds that there's "a lot of school spirit here" and it's a "welcoming place." Also that, "the people here are so incredibly nice, respectful, supportive, and kind." If she could teach any other subject she would choose P.E. because, "they have so much more fun than we do."

Morten teaches Spanish I, II, and III. She has previously taught elementary, high school, and adult ESL (English as a Second Language). Morten says she wanted to be a teacher because, "I like working with students and I like being able to share my experiences and knowledge." Morten finds that students here are hard working, respectful, and proud of their school and she seems to enjoy the school spirit. She was interested in becoming a teacher at BFA because it was a part of her community and she said, "I heard a lot of good things about the school, faculty, and students." She also finds that BFA has "a lot of different types of opportunities for students." Morten says that if she could teach any other class it would be ESL.

Living better with Walmart

by Stefanie Baker

Walmart has been trying to make its way to St. Albans since 1993. After several years of debate over the topic, the Vermont Supreme Court is finally allowing it to.

While some are ecstatic about the idea of Walmart being so much closer, others are concerned with what it will do to downtown St. Albans and the environmental impact it will have.

Some say that the traffic that Walmart will bring to St. Albans will actually help the small businesses in downtown, instead of having a negative effect.

With Walmart being so close, it may put family owned businesses out of business. Those against Walmart coming are also concerned that it will lead to an overgrowth of commercial development in the area.

The location of this project will be on Rt. 7 across from the drive-in movie theater in St. Albans town.

"Construction can literally start any day now," says Mayor Martin Manahan, "they have road improvements that are required to be done as part of the permit." The store is expected to be opening in about two years.



Exchanging a few words

by Kaylie Cadorette

This year there are a couple of new faces from different countries in the halls. They are foreign exchange students. BFA participates in the foreign exchange program for a few reasons.

The foreign exchange program minimizes stereotypes about other countries that students here may have so foreign students can see how American teenagers live. In addition, American teens can learn about teenagers from other countries and cultures, according to Katharine Hutchinson. Although students can stay for one semester, most stay for a full school year. While some get here weeks before school starts, many get here just a day or two before.

One of the two students is Jorge Midon. He is a sophomore from Zaragoza, Spain. He came to America to improve his English and to try a different kind of life. When asked about his experience so far, he said that it has been "very good" and that it has been easy to make friends. Midon's favorite school subject is geometry. Jorge plays soccer, tennis, skis and enjoys swimming.

In his free time he likes to hang out with his friends, and spend time with his family. He has a few friends here and there. He has a few friends here and there. He has a few friends here and there.



Jorge Midon (left) and Rotjanasak "Aun" Sawariphol (right)

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exchange student at BFA is "Aun" a junior, from Thailand. Aun became a

foreign exchange student to meet new people and to strengthen his English. He said that the differences between here and Thailand are the people, which he likes, the homework and that people don't understand him. Aun says it has been easy to make friends. After high school Aun plans to go to college, and come back to America if given the chance. Back home, he has a 13 year old brother. Aun enjoys playing badminton, and in his free time he likes to sleep and read. When asked about his favorite music he said, with a giggle, that he likes Lady Gaga.

"Home" life for the students is new too. Both host families have children who are out of high school, and they have both learned interesting aspects about the countries and cultures that Aun and Jorge come from. For example, in Thailand, they don't have dogs as pets. One thing that a host family likes about hosting a foreign exchange student, is that they are seeing Vermont from the eyes of someone who has never been here before.

This week in history

by Connor Duquette

From plunging down the Niagara Falls in a barrel, to Pablo Picasso breathing his first breath, the week of Oct. 24th will surely be one to remember.

In 1901, the first person to sail over the Niagara Falls in a barrel lived to tell the story. Annie Edson Taylor, although not the first to attempt, saw the opportunity to jump on her birthday, Oct. 24th after studying the waterfall because of its beauty. Taylor originally wanted to become famous and rich, but never thought it through clearly that it was illegal and blatantly dangerous. At age 63, Taylor padded up a makeshift barrel, tied it to a tow boat and cut the rope to plunge 176 feet to the basin below. Not only is the height an issue, but from the middle of the falls to the bottom is a collage of rocks and cliffs.

Twenty minutes after the initial departure from the boat, Taylor floated to shore alive. After the attention was gone, Taylor's plan had actually backfired with the amount of fines she had to pay. Although she was practically broke due to the fines, she still

inspired a group of 15 more people to take the dive between 1901 and 1995.

In that same year, in Malaga, Spain, artist Pablo Picasso was born. His father, a professor of drawing, breed his son to be an artist, sent him to art school and had him highly interested in art by the age of 13. Picasso later quit art school to travel to Paris and study modern arts. By the age of 19, he had already produced hundreds of paintings. After becoming a popular artist, he stayed in Paris for another year and finally settled in. *The Old Guitarist*, *d'Avignon* and *The Three Musicians* were among his most popular works of art that he made throughout his life. One of his works was destroyed by German war planes because of its meaning. *Guernica* was destroyed because it portrayed the suffering of the town of Guernica faced during the Spanish Civil War.

Picasso's work after WWII is less studied than his earlier creations although he explored more aspects of art such as ceramics and putting his spin on other famous artists work. Picasso died at the age of 91 in 1973.

Casting a spell

by Ashleigh Peterson

Those who believe that BFA's fall production of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* is just a name on a sign are sorely mistaken. It is a musical on the surface, but each member of the cast and crew can vouch that it is much more.

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, presenting this month in the BFA Performing Arts Center, is the product of a group's passion for performance. In the months leading up to the premier, the members of the drama club have to dedicate themselves completely to the musical. Rehearsals are a priority, cast members are friends and lines from the play are running jokes.

The musical is a focal point of the actors' lives, much to their enjoyment.

"I love it," Tracey Crocker, a sophomore in the drama club said. Crocker plays Leaf Coneybear, one of the six main contestants in the musical. It follows

them throughout the spelling competition of their lives and illustrates the ups and downs of early adolescence through songs, laughs and words.

"It's one of the funniest plays I've ever heard of," Jeremy Laroche, a sophomore who plays speller William Barfee, stated. With audience involvement and frequent ad lib, the musical is a widely different experience at every showing.

Putting on a play of such complexity requires much effort from all participants. There are numerous pieces of the equation that need to be taken into consideration. Songs, lines, choreography, sets, costumes and stage equipment must be perfected. It is a demanding commitment from all, but despite all of these efforts, BFA drama director Joan Grant says that the cast is "still laughing."

The importance of the drama program lies deeper than the upcoming performance, though. The atmosphere and bonds

created establish its true value.

"It's a great environment to be in. I've met so many great people," Crocker said. Along with rehearsing lines and choreography, they are also forming friendships and memories.

For some, BFA drama has sparked aspirations for an acting career. For others it has cultivated a lifelong interest. Laroche does not plan on becoming an actor, but he would like to continue drama "as a hobby."

Whether cast members hope to act in the future or not, their participation in the production has a great impact on their high school years. It provides a sense of confidence and stage presence for the actors, skills that can be used offstage as well.

At present, the group's goal is more straightforward. They want to entertain audiences with the production that, as Crocker says, is "fun for everyone."



Sports

Looking back: fall sports teams

By Mikayla Kane



Fall Sports started with a small damper on their season, but it wasn't long until they shook it off. Varsity football started off their season with a win at St. Johnsbury and then suffered a difficult loss during the first home game against Hartford. The loss motivated the team to work their hardest. It didn't take long for the team motto "finish", to be adopted. Captain, Oliver Manning was pleased with the season. He was happy to see his team "emerge as a division one powerhouse once again." Football set their record at 7-1 and ranked the second seed.

Captains Taylor Raftery and Isaac Devoid both acknowledge Sam Rose for aiding the team to success.

"He never takes a day off" said Raftery, "He really stepped up his game this year."

"Positive team chemistry leads to positive experiences" explained Coach Geoff Murray.

Manning, as well as Raftery, admitted they will miss the "brotherhood" that formed during the season.

Boys varsity soccer had its ups and downs this season, but resulted with a boy's varsity record (6-8) that BFA hasn't seen for years.

"This season has been much more successful than past seasons. The team just seems to play like a family more than past teams" admitted captain, Connor Walsh.

John Pion agreed with Walsh and added "[The team's] ability to communicate and be unselfish on the field has truly shown through this season."

An addition to the boys soccer team this



year was Kyle Ashton, a goalie coach. Ashton worked directly with the teams goalies to better their skills.

Head Coach Luke Laroche says that the goalies benefited from having Ashton this year. "Coach [Ashton] really knows his stuff" said Laroche.

Walsh notes a difference in the team's goalie, Cameron White.

"Cam White has shown great improvement this year. He has had a great impact on the team and has aided towards all of our wins and also close games."

The Bobwhites ranked 13th seed for the playoffs.

Girls varsity kicked off their season with an overtime win against BFA's rivals MVU. Later in the season BFA defeated the Thunderbirds once again.

The Comets (10-3) went on to win twice against Enosburg and Lamoille, once against Rice, Middlebury, Vegennes, and Mt. Abraham.

The girls suffered three losses, two to Milton and one to Colchester. A big highlight for the girls this year was their win against Rice.

"After conceding two back-to-back goals midway through the first half we managed to score three late in the second half to get the victory," said captain, Danielle Esenler. "The willpower and effort we put into coming back...was definitely worth it when the final whistle was blown and the victory was ours."

The most rewarding accomplishment for the



city and JV teams placed in the top five.

The season has not come to a complete close. Some runners will be racing at the state meet in Theford Oct. 29 and the New England's race in Rhode Island Nov. 12.

Cheerleading had a successful and busy season this fall. Homecoming presented the team with three games in a row to cheer for.

"[It] was pretty intense but the team and I had tons of fun" explained Captain Kaitlin White.

Cheer tends to fly under the radar, but they are a big attribute to BFA's school spirit.

"We support the team and get the crowd pumped up at games and pep rallies. We live to raise the team's spirit by making posters and decorating locker rooms before games," stated White.

As the season comes to a close, the team is pleased with the effort they gave.

"I'm very proud of my team and the progress we have made," said captain Savannah Trainer.

Dance dedicated "a lot of hard work and determination [to their season]," said Captain Savanna Bechard.

"The highlight of [the] season was Homecoming in which they performed Lady Gaga in Gaga costumes at the football game," said BFA coach Roxanne Skeels.

In addition to dancing during games, the dance team hosted the second annual "Fight like a Girl Zumba Party" at BFA to raise money for breast cancer.

As the Fall season comes to an end, the dancers look forward to competing during their winter season.



Comets was "Future Comets Day," a day when the girls from local areas, fifth through eighth grade, went to an hour long practice with the Comets.

"Both kids and our players enjoyed it. It allowed the girls to have fun but also connect with the players who will one day be wearing those same jerseys as our high school girls," said Coach Jake Toof.

The varsity girls worked hard all season and demonstrated great teamwork. Tori Hubbard's excellence was noted by captain Elizabeth Qua.

"Tori is such a positive player on our team. She really has amazing potential for future years," said Qua.

The Comets ranked fifth seed for the playoffs.

The Cross Country season was full of team success as well as personal success. Highlights of the season were the BFA-Fairfax relays and a trip to New York City for a race in Manhattan.

"It's fascinating to watch about 300 runners take off every few minutes," admits runner, Amanda Porter.

A favorite race for the team is the Fairfax relays. Not simply because the race is only 1.5 miles long but because the runners get to dress up and run in costume.

For most Cross Country runners the most rewarding part of the season is simply crossing the finish line at every race.

This year a moment that stands out for the team is the U-32 race in which boys and girls var-



Green and gold will never get old

By Amy Rixon

BFA has seen numerous talented athletes go through the Academy Athletics. Many of these continue this tradition through college. Tracking down these former students, they were asked about their experiences in their beloved sport.

Isaac French
(To the right)
Where are you studying?
I'm studying Music and psychology at Castleton State College.

What sports do you participate in?
I participate in Varsity Cross Country.

How does a college sport compare to a high school sport?

Being on the Cross Country team here at Castleton, I've realized that it's very similar to Cross Country at BFA. College is a little more strict when it comes to attendance, though. You have to be very well organized, if you're playing a sport in college. You're on your own, you don't have your parents to tell you to do your homework, or wake you up for a morning practice. Also, you're at a higher level of competition, which is a great experience.

Has your experience with BFA sports helped with your success at your college sport?

My experience with BFA sports has helped me tremendously in college. In high school, you learn all about team unity, pride, and leadership. These characteristics will help you not only in sports, but in your everyday life.

How are college relationships with your teammates different or similar to your high school ones?

A difference between the relationships are that you're on a college campus. You get to

hang out with your teammates pretty much whenever you want. In high school, a teammate may live twenty minutes away from you, which makes it hard to hang out outside of school/practice. Also, it seems to me athletes in college are more competitive towards each other.

What impact did BFA coaches have on you?

BFA coaches had a huge impact on me. Coach Mashtare is the main reason that I'm successful with my college cross country. "Mind over body", is one of his great sayings, which changed the way I look at sports. Not only did he help me mature as a runner, but as a person, too.

Now that you are out of high school, how do you feel BFA sports helped you as an overall person?

BFA sports helped me mature as a person, and develop leadership skills. Playing a sport every semester, every year, I learned time management, which is a key to success in life.

What are the most important things you have learned through high school sports that would be useful for BFA athletes to know?

In high school sports at BFA, you learn to have fun and be serious at the same time. In college, people tend to forget about the "fun" in the sport, which can have a negative affect on the team. Just remember to always have fun, and work hard.



Grace Long
(To the left)
Where are you studying?
I am studying psychology at UVM.

What sports do you participate in?
I am a cheerleader on the UVM cheer team. It's a club sport, but we cheer for all the UVM men's and women's basketball games.

How does a college sport compare to a high school sport?

Honestly my club team is very similar to my high school team. [However,] there are more severe punishments for missing practices and games. The time commitment is less, however the expectations of knowing material is higher.

Has your experience with BFA sports helped with your success at your college sport?

I believe that my experience with BFA sports has greatly influenced the athlete I have become. At BFA there is a tight [and] close-knit feel between the sports teams, coaches, and of course Mr. Marlow. I think the time I spent at BFA in sports shaped me to become a better athlete than those who were not fortunate enough to have my same high school athletic experience.

How are college relationships with your teammates different or similar to your high school ones?

I think in high school you become friends with people like you, and the relationships on my team

are with many varieties of people, and I like that. Teammates are instant connections and its nice to know more people in a place where you could easily feel lost in the shuffle.

What impact did BFA coaches have on you?

I love my BFA coaches. They really helped me develop my leadership skills and I wouldn't be the same without them.

Now that you are out of high school, how do you feel BFA sports helped you as an overall person?

I think BFA sports helped me become a leader and someone who doesn't give up. I learned through my experience as a BFA cheerleader that hard work pays off. Through my experience on the BFA athletic council I learned integrity and... thoroughly refined my leadership skills.

What are the most important things you have learned through high school sports that would be useful for BFA athletes to know?

The most helpful thing I learned from BFA sports that other athletes should know is your actions on and off the field reflect who you are as a person and are a direct reflection of your team. Even if you are not in a leadership role you can be a leader. I also think athletes in high school should remember most of you won't have the same level of participation in college. Enjoy your time in high school it goes by too fast.

If you know of an athlete participating in a unique sport or would like to be featured in our alumni series, please contact the Mercury Staff on our Facebook page.