

IN THIS ISSUE



Meet all of
Commonwealth's new
faculty members!*

Gordon, Lydston, Broida
Page 3

Barsi
Page 4

Sabin, Tarnoff, Lai
Page 5



Community Service

Day of Service
Page 2



Diversity

Submissions from the
microaggressions box
Page 7

*Note: Due to scheduling conflicts, an article on Mr. Lasker will be in the next issue.

Students Adjust to New Jobs Program

By Arthur Mateos

The jobs program at Commonwealth has changed dramatically this year. Previously, lunch cleanup had been on a bi-weekly schedule: two crews, red and white would alternate weeks. Now, Jobs Coordinator Ms. Anna Moss explains, “we have three crews, red, yellow, and blue, and two work at a time. The week color is just the combo of the two crew colors of that week. For example, if red and yellow are working, it’s an orange week.”

The change has been unpopular among students: according to an anonymous poll of returning students, 22 of 48 respondents favor last year’s system, while only 11 prefer the new one. Of these, 8 “strongly prefer” last year’s system; 3 “strongly prefer” this year’s.

One complaint among students is that the new system leaves them with fewer free periods since they are now assigned to work two out of three weeks, instead of once every other week.

Some students say that the change has been ineffective in terms of speeding up the job. “I don’t feel having two crews working at once speeds the rate significantly enough to justify using a whole period much more often,” said one 12th grade respondent.



Lunch clean on pots

“You can’t put more people on pots, and pots always take forever to finish. The crew heads have to wait around until pots [are] finished even though tables finished 20 minutes before,” added an 11th grader, himself a crew head.

Ms. Moss hears the student complaints about the change, but she recalls a very different context: “Last year, I got almost daily complaints by students about missing part of seventh period,” she said. When she sent out a survey last spring proposing what is now the current system, the response from students was “overwhelmingly positive.” Back at the time,

Continued on page 4



New lunch crew rotation

Launch of Merit Pages

By Catherine Cray

Director of Communications Tristan Davies is overseeing the launch of Merit Pages, an online service that Commonwealth is now using to record and share students’ achievements. With Merit, Mr. Davies can communicate these achievements much more efficiently because a post on a student’s Merit Page triggers a submission to that student’s hometown newspaper. For example, in less than ten minutes Mr. Davies is able to send out the announcement about National Merit Commended Students at Commonwealth, which would have taken hours to complete had he needed to submit to each student’s hometown newspaper individually.

His goal, Mr. Davies says, is “to get Commonwealth’s name out there.” Merit Pages streamlines and facilitates that process.

Mr. Davies first discovered Merit



last December when a previous student’s college used Merit to send Commonwealth an update that the student had made Honor Roll.

“Once I learned about it and saw that the idea was to get the news out, I really became interested,” Mr. Davies says.

After that discovery, the Communications Committee, which includes Admissions Director Carrie Healy, Headmaster William Wharton, and Director of Development Janetta Stringfellow, discussed the possibility of Commonwealth

Continued on page 4

WHY VOLUNTEERING MEANS MORE THAN SERVICE

By Rossella Cerulli and Kevin Ballen

Community Service Club (Commonwealth Cares) is taking on many fantastic new projects this year! We worked very hard over the summer and throughout the first quarter to put several exciting ideas into practice with the hope of bringing new options and awareness to the school community. The two biggest projects this year are The Day of Service and the Tutoring & Mentoring Program at the YMCA. These programs are student-designed and student-organized with help from our generous advisors, Frederique Thiebault-Adjout and Melissa Haber. Our goal is to offer more variety in the Community Service options for Commonwealth students, and we encourage students (and faculty!) to broaden their service horizons, as there is always a worthy cause in need of your support.

Kevin

This year on November 10th, we will have our first-ever Day of Service, a school day devoted to volunteering at different organizations throughout the city. The idea originated last year when I was volunteering at the Pine Street Inn, serving dinner at the Women's Emergency Shelter with a church group from Quincy. Before we began, they included me in their prayer circle. Being fairly unreligious, I was very reluctant; but they insisted that they would not pray unless I joined them. So, I held hands with two strangers, as they passionately shouted, "Praise the man above!" Their praises were followed with a "Mhhmmm" and a "yes Sir!" The invigorating exclamations echoed through the kitchen and completely filled the room. I lost myself in the moment and instantly forged a connection with these strangers. We all were there and grateful for the same reason: we were able to help others. That's the mission for this Day of Service. Unselfishly helping others nurtures a special connection, one that might not be as easily achieved by other school activities. It can be hard to find a time to volunteer during the school year, so the Day of Service is an opportunity for everyone to connect with not only the Commonwealth community, but also with the Boston community. A main concern surrounding this Day of Service is the question of whether we can make a difference in only one day. First, many organizations only function with volunteer support daily. Second, little things, such as picking up trash, reading to children, or serving a meal with a smile make a big difference. I made a connection with complete strangers in a matter of minutes; an entire day will make a huge difference in our community.

Rosie

With almost twenty percent of the student body signed up, I have high hopes for the success of the YMCA Program. In keeping with our "city campus," student volunteers travel less than ten minutes on the green line, down to the oldest YMCA branch in the country, located on Huntington Avenue. The newly renovated building provides a fabulous setting for our exciting new volunteer work. We work directly with the Y's after-school program, designed for children aged 3-14. Our students must have a certain spirit of adventure and willingness to try new things,



because we never know what a particular Tuesday afternoon will bring. Since the first volunteer session, we've quickly discovered that the children have the kind of boundless energy that can be overwhelming, but our volunteers brought their own enthusiasm, matching (and sometimes exceeding) that of the little ones. For me, it's very gratifying to be able to put aside thoughts of academics for a few hours. I find that devoting time and energy to something completely outside the intellectual realm can be an easily-attainable antidote to the everyday stresses of school. This type of volunteer work is purely based on one's ability to wholeheartedly connect with other people, without any reservations. Children have a surprising ability to sense our discomfort, which can make some people nervous. However, I find that they are amazingly forgiving when you are able to simply relax and enjoy yourself. Finding that spirit—that wonderful sense of fun and ease you might have lost somewhere in the mountains of homework each night—is a skill that can be incredibly helpful to balance your life. You may be surprised by how uncluttered your head will feel after even just a little while volunteering, and I can guarantee that you'll leave the Y smiling on Tuesday afternoons, with a light-hearted, almost peaceful feeling that will stay with you longer than you might think.



Editor-in-Chief: Amanda Dai

Newspaper Advisor: Melissa Haber

Editors: Nicole Liu, Arthur Mateos

Formatting team: Momo Afreen, Ofelia Cohen-Odiaga, Nicole Liu, Allison Stillerman

Writers: Iman Ali, Catherine Cray, Nika Eringros, Zehra Jafri, Nicole Liu, Arthur Mateos,

Noah Powell, Allison Stillerman, Maya Venkatraman

Columnists: Momo Afreen, Kevin Ballen, Rossella Cerulli

Political columnists: Zoe Papastoitsis, Benjamin Powell

The Leek: Matthew Boudreau

Photos: Anna Holderness, Zoe Wennerholm



Mr. Gordon

By Nicole Liu

After working for an insurance company for the past couple of years, doing what he described as “boring office jobs,” Mr. Nathaniel Gordon wanted a change. Now, he’s a Geometry teacher and the in-house tutor for math and science here at Commonwealth School.



“When I came here for the first time, I was really struck by what a great community it was, and I just wanted to get involved with such a cool team and with such nice kids in general,”

Mr. Gordon said. “It’s really nice to see how I can be so welcomed. Not just me; the new students seem to be already making friends with seniors, which you don’t necessarily see in a lot of high schools.”

Although he’s still adapting to Commonwealth and learning from his colleagues, there is one thing Mr. Gordon always tries to bring to places he lives and grows in: an excitement for the subject he’s involved with.

“I’ve always been really excited about math and getting people to understand something that maybe they don’t like that much,” he explained. “Even if a student might not be wild about math, I try to get them really invested in it.”

Besides teaching math, Mr. Gordon is also very dedicated to hiking and running. He spent six months hiking the whole Appalachian Trail, and would get up “much too early” to run a few miles every day before school. He also describes himself as a bookworm, and enjoys contemporary fiction. His favorite books include *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* and *Everything and More: A Compact History of Infinity* by David Foster Wallace, and *Once a Runner* by John L. Parker Jr.

When asked what his experience at Commonwealth was like so far, Mr. Gordon said: “It was kind of funny; at a bigger school, I’m only expected to know a few faces from my classes. Here, with just 150 people, you kind of have to know everyone—and that’s a big wave of people. Each day I see almost everyone on my way to class.” Mr. Gordon is also helping out with the job program, so we will see him running around the building trying to find those who didn’t show up for their jobs. He said in the future, he would be happy to help out with clubs and the bigger projects around the school.

Ms. Lydston

By Zehra Jafri

One of the many new faces this year is Commonwealth’s librarian Ms. Melissa Lydston. Before coming to Commonwealth, Ms. Lydston worked as a librarian at many other institutions such as Lexington’s Cary Memorial Library, Goddard Library in Worcester, the American Antiquarian Society, and Nichols College Library.



Ms. Lydston has always had an interest in literature. She majored in English in college with a concentration in creative writing. She is currently working on a collection of vignettes that features the everyday lives of longtime friends and new acquaintances in Boston. Each poetic vignette is accompanied by a picture of the subject. Her favorite reads include

“On Beauty” and “White Teeth” by Zadie Smith and “Picture This” by Molly Bang, an exciting book about understanding comics and the history of visual representation.

One of the exciting databases that Ms. Lydston hopes to make accessible for students to use is called EBSCO, a single database that compiles data from multiple large databases such as eBooks and JStor, to make searches more efficient.

“I love working at Commonwealth,” Ms. Lydston said. “It reminds me of my teenagerdom, kids who love to learn and aren’t afraid to express themselves.”

How well do you know Ms. Haber?

One of these facts is false. Can you guess which one?



- 1 I was born with a vestigial gill on my right ear.
- 2 I have a port wine stain on the bottom my foot.
- 3 I spent a year as a programmer in a public policy research institute.
- 4 When I was in college, I taught classes in Special Relativity and Quantum Mechanics.
- 5 When I was nine, I sang a anti-litter jingle on a television public service announcement.

2 is false. My birthmark is elsewhere!

Mr. Broida

By Nika Eringros

As the new school year kicks off, there are many new faces among students and faculty alike, including the new Admissions Assistant Michael Broida. When Mr. Broida came to Boston from University of Pennsylvania, he began to look for a job here, for he wanted to work at a school similar to his own independent high school in Cleveland. So when a friend told him about Commonwealth, he knew where he wanted to go.

“It seemed like a unique and special place to work,” he said. His passion for the school made him the perfect candidate for the job. He was very happy that the school liked him. When it came to what he would be doing, admissions was an obvious choice. While he had background in teaching, admissions allowed him to work with families that are interested in the school.

“I love working with families because I can share my enthusiasm with them about the school,” he said. “I also enjoy being able to do community outreach as a part of my job.”

Mr. Broida could not think of anything that he dislikes about his work. However, he does have a least favorite part of the school in general. Occasionally getting lost before school started was a problem for him, but luckily, he said, none of the students were there to see it.

When asked if he would have imagined being here where he was now five years ago, at 19, he said, “I wouldn’t be surprised to be here, but the road I took to get here would be very surprising.”



Mr. Barsi

By Noah Powell

This year, Physics teacher Mr. Christopher Barsi joined the Commonwealth faculty. I had the chance to sit down with him and talk about his experiences as a new teacher and his career before Commonwealth.



Before he began teaching here, Mr. Barsi worked as a research scientist at MIT, where he studied imaging and the development of new types of cameras. One project that particularly interested him was the creation of a camera that could take pictures through a scattering media, like clouds or paper. "If you take a picture in a novel way using advanced systems involving lasers, you can still get enough information to numerically reconstruct what's hidden behind those things."

Mr. Barsi already taught higher level classes as a teaching assistant and researcher. "I was always interested in physics, dismantling things and putting them back together, and understanding how the natural world works," he said. "I also really enjoy discussing that with people, so I think teaching is a perfect match." This is the first time he's worked with high schoolers, and He says that this change has allowed him to focus more on teaching and less on "writing grants, publishing papers, and the bureaucratic stuff that you see at college."

When asked why he switched to teaching high school, Mr. Barsi said that his decision was less about "why high school?" and more about "why Commonwealth?" His explained: "I think the students are interested enough and exciting enough to work with in a very stimulating way. It's not boring here, it's fun."

In addition to his role as a teacher, Mr. Barsi also leads the robotics club and acts as an advisor. These other roles in the community have allowed him to gain another perspective on his students. "It's neat to get a different picture of different people. Instead of learning just what goes on in the classroom, you see what they do outside. It's a lot of fun."

Like many of us, the physics teacher's greatest challenge in his new job is time management. "We have a few hours in a day and we have to get everything done." Nonetheless he loves: "just working with students and colleagues who are fun and interesting."

Merit Pages

Continued from page 1

using Merit and prepared for its launch at the start of this year.

So far, Merit has been very successful. Some parents had voiced concerns that Merit might foster competition among students, and feared some students would share their accomplishments over social media to brag. However, Merit has not created a competitive atmosphere where one did not exist.

Seeing Merit's successful start, Mr. Davies plans to expand it to share more than solely academic news.

"I hope to broaden out to include when students are in exchanges, plays, clubs," he says. "I want to share a fuller picture of what we do here."

Mr. Davies is not the only one who can use Merit. Students can customize their pages themselves, adding any of their activities, jobs, or other achievements. While it is by no means necessary for a student to use Merit, the online service could be a useful resource.

"Students can remind themselves, 'Hey, what was I doing in ninth grade?' when it comes time to apply to college," Mr. Davies says. Such reminders could be useful at Commonwealth in particular. "We aren't obsessive about keeping track so we can sell ourselves later," he notes.

In this way, Merit seems to be filling an important gap at Commonwealth. It not only allows Mr. Davies to more easily spread Commonwealth's name, but also helps students to record their achievements for the future.

National Merit Semifinalists

Megan Berry of Cambridge
 Matthew Boudreau of Norfolk
 Catherine Cray of Melrose
 Mehitabel Glenhaber of Somerville
 Abigail Kuchnir of Southborough
 Katrina Lee of Watertown
 Arthur Mateos of Arlington
 Benjamin Powell of Dedham
 Tamjid Rahman of Cambridge
 JackieS chollo fNeedham

Jobs program

Continued from page 1

students said that they were willing to sacrifice a free if it meant that they could be sure lunch clean wouldn't run over.

Last year's lateness issues were due to a number of factors: a below-average enrollment, more students taking more electives, and "a problem of consistent skipping by certain people."

Ms. Moss hopes that having smaller crews will help in solving this last issue. "I'm hoping that since each crew head this year is only in charge of six or seven people, they can more easily keep track if a student has been delinquent, and then tell me." So far, it's been working: "We haven't had any kids that I've had to hunt two weeks in a row," she said.



Another benefit of this year's program is that it allows for slightly larger lunch set-up and recess clean-up crews. "Last year, there were a couple of lunch set-up crews that had only two kids, so if one of them was out sick, it became an impossible Job," Ms. Moss said.

Going forward, Ms. Moss is still looking for ways to improve and refine the new system. Next year, she intends to reduce lunch set-up crews back to three students, as she has found that four is too many. Other ideas include the creation of new jobs: one to write out the daily menu that lists ingredients to help students with dietary restrictions, and another to supervise plate-clearing at the end of lunch—ensuring that compost, trash, and recycle are put in the proper bins.

Ms. Moss understands that the change is hard to accommodate. "I think it'll take a couple of years. I think it's something we'll have to adjust to."



Ms. Sabin

By Iman Ali

The building struck her with awe, and after absorbing her unique surroundings, history teacher Margaret Sabin knew she wanted to work here. She loves the intellectual environment that Commonwealth offers, which is focused on analytical reading and conversation.

"When I decided to move to the Boston area, Commonwealth was the first school I contacted to see if there were openings for history teachers," Ms. Sabin said.

This is Ms. Sabin's first year teaching at Commonwealth and she is covering the first semester of Barbara Grant's sabbatical as well as taking a section of ninth grade Ancient History for the entire year.

Before coming to Commonwealth, Ms. Sabin spent most of the last fifteen years teaching history in New Jersey and New York. Most recently, at the Kent Place School in New Jersey, where she taught U.S. history and modern world history for six years.

Ms. Sabin hadn't always wanted to be a history teacher. At first, she wanted to be a writer. After college, she worked as an apprentice journalist for Businessweek Magazine in New York. After her time there, Ms. Sabin decided to go to graduate school to study history because she felt she didn't know enough history to be the best writer that she could be. So, with the intention of becoming a better writer, Ms. Sabin entered graduate school at Yale with a focus in American studies.

She ended up falling in love with two things that hadn't originally been part of her interests: history and teaching. While in graduate school, Ms. Sabin did some student teaching in American studies, American literature, women's studies, and writing. She found excitement in teaching, especially when teaching history. Educating people about the world's past, and how and why certain things are the way they are now because of history, seemed rewarding to Ms. Sabin, so she decided to pursue teaching it.

As far as her hobbies go, Ms. Sabin enjoys swimming, biking, and cooking in her free time. But, she said, "My real passion is writing, and I'd like to be able to do it professionally with teaching."

When asked about her favorite part about Commonwealth and the community so far, Ms. Sabin said "Although it's an independent school, Commonwealth is engaged in trying to be as inclusive and diverse as it can be." She then added "I love the fact that the members of the Commonwealth community respect one another's idiosyncratic differences, and I feel very much at home here."



Ms. Tarnoff

By Maya Venkatraman

Athletics have always been very important to our new Director of Athletics and Wellness Kathy Tarnoff. She became involved in sports at a young age.

"I'm originally from Rockville, Maryland, and I had an older brother that played [soccer], so I wanted to play," she explained. "I got tired of sitting on the sidelines." As a child, athletics also presented a way for her to build relationships. "I grew up in a neighborhood where I was the only girl, so if I wanted to have friends, I had to play sports." Playing soccer in her neighborhood was the start of her unfaltering interest in sports.

She continued to be active during college, playing as goalie on both the women's soccer and lacrosse teams while she majored in biology at Brown. In college, athletics were especially important to her.

"Athletics helped me to stay organized in college because I burned all this excess energy off, and then I could focus on my studies," she said. Sports were also particularly useful to her during stressful periods of school. "When I was in college, there was a time when I was taking three very challenging courses. I had all three exams in the same week. But sports allowed me to give my brain a rest. So I would go to practice and say 'There is nothing I can do about the actual exam, so just drop it and focus [on soccer].'"

Ms. Tarnoff used to work with adults who had already developed unhealthy habits. Now, she hopes to instill the value of staying active in students during their formative years, which is what drew her to Commonwealth.

"It's about creating these positive habits now, so ten years later you can come back and say to me 'I still go to the Y three times a week and I feel good. I'm healthy.' My one long term goal is that you guys find an some sort of activity that will help you strike a balance in your life as a student."



41 Current and Former Students Honored by AP Scholar Program

Details at www.commschool.org

National Merit Commended Students

Daniel Albert-Rozenberg of Cambridge
 Emma Applbaum of Newtonville
 Philip Budding of Arlington
 Amanda Dai of Newton
 Francesco Drake of Arlington
 Rachelle Flowers of Marblehead
 Sarah Joffe of Cambridge
 Anna Koch of Brookline
 Mary Pedicini of Boston
 Ian Polakiewicz of Lexington
 Hannah Pucker of Newton
 Maria Ronchi of Marblehead
 Rachel Tils of West Newton
 Zoe Wennerholm of Boston
 Kyle Yee of Melrose

Model Congress

By Allison Stillerman

This February, Commonwealth will send 18 students to participate in the Harvard Model Congress. This is a relatively new club, formed last year, and I am surprised and delighted by how popular it is. The nature of Model Congress is such that it is really up to the individual to decide how dedicated he or she wants to be, and I think that this versatility greatly contributes to its success. Whether you've spent 20 hours or 20 minutes preparing, you are sure to have a good time.

Model Congress runs like the real Congress, with committees following parliamentary procedure. Each student is assigned a real-life congressperson whose view to represent in their respective committees, as well as in house- or senate-wide meetings, regardless of their personal views. This puts a lot of people in an interesting position, because they have to argue passionately for something that they do not in the least believe.

But all work and no play makes Model Congress a dull club. Both in and out of committee, there is always a chance to make it your own. For example, last year in my House Science and Technology committee, one delegate, upon being asked about the consequences of a certain bill being passed, simply listed off the ten plagues of Egypt and sat back down. The other delegations are full of interesting, often bizarre people, and often conversations in notes passed around can be just as interesting as the debates. Nevertheless, by far the best part of Model Congress is committing to Monday lunchtimes with me in meetings.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Why does good hair
happen to bad people?"
-Noah P.

Matt H.: Are there programming
languages in other languages, like
Java in Spanish?
Reid: It's pronounced 'HA-va.'

Halima (on a Hemingway character): I think
he's broken.

Chessy: He's not broken, just bent.

Ellie: (singing) "WE'RE NOT BROKEN JUST
BENT AND WE CAN LEARN TO LOVE
AGAINNN"

Ms Tyson: Ohhh lord.

Ellie: It's not Lorde, it's Pink.

"You should chill with the field
tenters. It's a party. Except
without the things you need for a
party, like alcohol and fun."
-Anna Koch

"You don't want to just-- *loud snort*
--you know, like a cocaine addict."
-Ms. Jackman on proper wafting
technique

Thank you as always to GMo, Tamjid, and Pher for running QOTW!

Ms. Lai

By Allison Stillerman

One of Commonwealth's
new additions to the staff,
Ying-Ju Lai, teaches short story
and fiction writing classes.
Born in Taiwan, she moved
around a lot, and spent a lot of
time in California before
returning to Taiwan for high
school. Because of this, she
believes that she is very
adaptable to new environments.

Relocating again, this time to
the east coast, Ms. Lai studied German and psychology at Wesleyan, then
earned her masters degree to become a scholar of German literature. Her
experiences of moving to a young country at a young age has given her a
lot of practice in reading facial expressions and tone, which comes in very
handy for descriptive writing, and allows her to "always know if someone
is telling a joke... so I can always laugh at the right time, even if I wasn't
listening."

Ms. Lai's passion for literature goes back to when she was six years
old. She had always wanted to write, beginning her first novel in
Mandarin. She wrote in secret about a romance between the son of a
wealthy man and a maid, "inspired by a Taiwanese melodrama from the
1980s," which she describes as "cliche-ridden, even though at the time I
thought it was very original." However, her mother found the story and
read it to her friends, embarrassing Ms. Lai so much that she gave up
writing for quite a long time. This novel is yet to be finished.

In 2012, Ms. Lai moved again, this time to Washington DC to work at
nonprofit organizations for human rights that helped grassroots
movements in China. She originally pursued an administrative job so that
she would have more time to write than she had when teaching. However,
her job turned out to be more work than she had expected—and she had
even less time. Still, she felt a yearning to be a part of a community of
writers who might be able to provide feedback on her work, in contrast to
the lawyers and lobbyists that frequent DC; so she moved to Boston to get
her second masters degree in creative writing.



ELECTIONS

By Benjamin Powell

November 4th was a bad night to be a
conservative. That is, if you were a Democrat.
Across the country, conservative Democratic
candidates seeking Governor's mansions and
Senate seats lost to Republicans. In Kentucky,
Alison Lundergan Grimes, a Democrat running
against Senate Majority Leader Mitch
McConnell, refused to say whether she even
voted for Obama. She lost by 16 percentage
points. Conservative democrats also lost in
other states, such as Georgia, Kansas, and
Alaska. Even more liberal Democrats in blue
states such as Illinois and Massachusetts, lost to
moderate or conservative Republicans in the
governor's races.

Here in Massachusetts, not only did Republican
Charlie Baker win the governorship, but
Republicans also picked up several seats in the
state legislature. Progressive ballot initiatives
such as Question 2, which would have instituted
a five cent deposit on bottles and cans; and
Question 3, which would have prevented casinos
from opening in the state, were defeated by a
significant margin, while Question 1 passed,
preventing the gas tax from automatically
increasing with inflation. While Baker is a fairly

moderate Republican, the results of the election
were fairly discouraging to Democrats, even in
liberal Massachusetts.

From a national perspective, the most
significant result may be that Republicans now
have a majority, both the House of
Representatives and the Senate. The
Republican Senate majority can make it
extremely difficult for Obama to nominate any
officials to empty posts in government
agencies. Over the past few years, they have
already used the filibuster to delay
appointments and prevent positions such as the
Surgeon General, from being filled. While the
rules of the Senate have since been changed so
that all posts below Cabinet-level cannot be
filibustered, the new majority means the
Republicans can simply vote not to confirm any
potential appointee, or even Supreme Court
justice. The Republicans now also have the
power to call Senate investigations. This gives
them a new platform to challenge the actions of
any political figure they oppose. Beyond
Obama, some journalists are speculating that
they will use this platform to weaken Secretary
Clinton's public image in anticipation of a 2016

presidential bid. Republicans also have
control over committee chairs of the different
Senate committees, as well as the usual
legislative powers to propose laws that Obama
must decide whether to veto.

There are several possible explanations for
the election results. One is voter turnout.
Turnout nationwide was in many places
disturbingly low. Combined with voter ID
laws, which disproportionately prevent
women, young people, minorities and the poor
from voting, the electorate was skewed in
favor of Republicans. Also contributing to
problems with turnout were the generally older
and whiter midterm electorate and the failure
of conservative Democrats to appeal to their
liberal base. Other explanations include
dissatisfaction with Obama's policies and a
general feeling of anger among many voters,
who feel that the Democrats should have been
able to do more. The simplest explanation
may just be arithmetic. Senate terms last for
six years, so the Senators up for reelection this
year were last elected in 2008. That year,
Obama's election drove massive voter turnout

Continued on the next page

ELECTIONS

Continued from page 6

and enthusiasm, boosting Democratic Senators in otherwise Republican states. Now, those Senators are up for reelection without the Obama wave. Democrats simply had more seats to lose.

There were a few results that didn't fit the overall narrative of conservative dominance on Tuesday. Ballot measures to raise the minimum wage were generally successful, including a measure in San Francisco to raise it to \$15/hour. Marijuana was legalized in a ballot measure in Washington DC; and Question 4, a measure here in Massachusetts mandating paid sick leave, was overwhelmingly successful. These results provide some hope for Democrats and liberals otherwise looking at a very red map for the next two years.

FERGUSON, MO: WHY WE NEED TO ACT

By Zoe Papastoitsis

On August 9th, 2014, Michael Brown was shot and killed by an officer in Ferguson, Missouri. The death of the eighteen-year-old caused outrage in the community and started a series of protests that have continued to the present day, as well as giving a voice to many young black activists. One of these activists is Ashley Yates, who grew up in Missouri and co-founded Millennial Activists United, which aims to take active steps to prevent further violence against people of color. She continues her efforts unfazed by opposition, even after being arrested while protesting.



Activists speak out about Ferguson shooting
Right to left: Tef Poe, Ashley Yates, Tory Russell

According to Yates, the sluggish change that would occur within the government is not enough. She argues that the system is already broken and is not a tool that can be used to further the cause. The people need to create the change they wish to see outside the government. For example, Yates focuses on a civilian review board for the situation, where social media and the media in general has played an important role.

Yates is one of many new on-the-ground activists who are leading the center of a national struggle. Now, she believes, is the time for a real change.

"We are tired. We are tired of seeing our black men get gunned down; we're tired of seeing our black women get gunned down—and particularly, unarmed black people get gunned down to an excessive extent."

DIVERSITY

Ignorance

By Momo Afreen

Let's agree on one fact: it's the ignorance of the feelings and opinions of those who are different from us that causes many of the problems in our community. I am not saying that you have to agree with their opinions or affirm their feelings, but rather, it is important to educate yourself in order to better your community. At Commonwealth, you can do that by talking to people outside of your friendship group (including about matters outside school), reading articles on the Diversity and GSA board, and attending Diversity, Feminism, or GSA—because conversations regarding diversity should not be, as Charles M. Blows accurately states, "an insulated, circular, intra-racial dialogue only among people who feel aggrieved." But, I'm sure you knew all that already.

Many people tend to be respectfully ignorant because they think our differences don't matter. People would not be oppressed because of their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status if our differences didn't matter. I agree, everyone can get along despite differences, but to ignore those differences to reach a fake harmony is awful.

Diversity meets every Wednesday at lunch.

The Micro-Aggression Box

Definition of Micro-Aggression:

"A microaggression is a brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignity, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicates a hostile, derogatory, or negative slight or insult toward people of non-dominant identities."

Submissions

"So which one of you is the guy in the relationship?"

"When you come out to your dad and he says, 'oh you're too young to understand that stuff.'"

"Someone came up to me and touched my hair without my consent and said, 'I love your hair.'"

"Having school on Jewish high-holidays."

"A group of boys excluded me and another female classmate from a conversation about Calculus, assuming we wouldn't be interested."

"Be a man."



Diversity Committee

Shiroi Yasai Udon Recipe

Submitted by Anna Koch

Broth

Ingredients:

- ½ cup soy sauce
- 2 cups water
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- 8 tablespoons packed brown sugar
- 2-3 tablespoons honey
- 4 tablespoons cornstarch
- ¼ cup cold water

Instructions:

1. Mix all but the cornstarch and ¼ cup water in medium-sized saucepan and begin heating, stirring lightly until ingredients are blended.
2. Combine the cornstarch and ¼ cup water, mixing until dissolved. Add the mixture to the saucepan.
3. Continue cooking over medium heat, stirring constantly, until the sauce condenses to desired thickness (water can also be added to thin the broth if it becomes too heavy).

Vegetables

Mushroom and Bean Sprout Mélange with Butter and Sake:

Ingredients:

- 1 lb. Mushroom mixture: enoki and shimeji varieties
- ½ lb. bean sprouts
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 teaspoons sake

Instructions:

1. Set oven to 325° Fahrenheit. Set aside a large piece of aluminum foil (at least 10”x13”).
2. Trim the thick ends of the enoki and shimeji mushrooms, leaving most of the stem intact. Gently pull them apart leaving the mushrooms in small, white clumps.
3. Pile the mushrooms and bean sprouts in the center of the foil, and cut the butter into 1-inch cubes. Dot the mushrooms and bean sprouts with the butter.
4. Using a basting brush, lightly drizzle the pile with sake.
5. Take the long sides of the foil and bring them together over the pile and fold closed. Roll each end toward the center, crimping the edges, enclosing the package.
6. Bake for 15 minutes or until the mushrooms have softened and the sake has cooked down.

Sautéed Vidalia Onions

Ingredients:

- 2 large Vidalia onions, thinly sliced
- 2-3 cloves minced garlic
- 3-4 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons sake (optional)
- 1 tablespoon sugar

Instructions:

1. Using a wide, thick-bottomed sauté pan, heat the butter over low heat until completely melted.
2. Add the onion slices and stir to coat the onions with melted butter. Turn up the heat to medium-high. Spread the onions evenly over the pan and let simmer, stirring occasionally. Sprinkle in minced garlic cloves.
3. After a minute or two, add the sugar (and sake if desired).
4. Continue cooking for 5-7 minutes or until tender, stirring frequently.

All that’s left is to throw everything together in a bowl with some udon noodles and enjoy!

THE LEEK News In Brief

By Matthew Boudreau

Terrorist Attacks the U.S. in Ottawa

Defense Department officials said the attack in Ottawa a few days ago was an attempt to attack the U.S.: “He probably got lost and thought he was in New York,” stated a top official. “They’re not that far apart.”

Ebola Infects U.S. Citizens

The deadly virus which has been killing thousands of foreigners who we don’t care about, has, tragically, spread to a few U.S. citizens.

What kind of tea are you?

A personality quiz courtesy of Allison Stillerman

What do you do when the alarm goes off in the morning?

- A. Hit the snooze button and keep sleeping
- B. Look out the window to see what the weather is like
- C. Get dressed
- D. Stumble to the kitchen for caffeine

How would you describe your personal style?

- A. Classy
- B. Functional
- C. Comfortable
- D. Fun

What is your favorite kind of dog?

- A. I’m more of a cat person
- B. Lab
- C. Golden Retriever
- D. Chihuahua

What is your favorite way to procrastinate?

- A. Napping
- B. Being outdoors
- C. I usually just power through my work
- D. Making art

What do you usually do with a free period?

- A. Nap
- B. Take a walk on the mall
- C. Get ahead on work
- D. Hang out with friends

What do you usually do with a free period?

- A. Nap
- B. Take a walk on the mall
- C. Get ahead on work
- D. Hang out with friends

Mostly “A”: You are chamomile tea. Calm and relaxed, you are always ready to take a step back and take a breather to reset before continuing with a difficult task.

Mostly “B”: You are herbal tea. Earthy and centered, you love the outdoors and appreciate nature.

Mostly “C”: You are black tea. Straightforward and practical, you like to get things done.

Mostly “D”: You are red tea. Unique and a little bit off the radar, you are always ready to bring a new, unfamiliar spin to any situation.

Side Dish: Candied Sweet Potatoes

Ingredients:

- 1 large sweet potato
- 1 tablespoon butter or sesame oil
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil

Instructions:

1. Peel the sweet potato and cut diagonally into wedges.
2. Heat the butter or sesame oil in a frypan until melted then add the sweet potato wedges. Stir gently over medium heat until the sweet potatoes begin to soften and brown.
3. In a small saucepan, heat 1 tsp vegetable oil and sugar until the sugar melts and begins to boil. Quickly add the cooked sweet potatoes and remove from heat. Stir briskly until the sweet potato wedges are completely coated in a thin layer of melted sugar.