

BACKPACK GANG



A publication made by college students,
for college students

*Letter from the editor
on the next page*

SPORTS



ADVENTURE



CARS



FOOD



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear readers:

I am thrilled to present you with the first issue of The Backpack Gang, a new readers digest that publishes a variety of excellent stories for college students. I am truly honored to be working with Griffin Bengraff, Hunter Macintyre, Jackson Crawford, and Zach Canaperi. Their hard work and ambition have shaped our publication into something we are all proud of. With these skilled members on my team, The Backpack Gang is ready to provide the most valuable and relevant information. Articles will include student resources, events and activities, food reviews, and so much more. Expect to be entertained and expect to learn.

This first issue is no exception. Our writers have combined forces to generate nine unique articles. Inside you will learn about sports, food, cars, and climbing mountains. We hope that you can gain something from each one, whether it be a lesson or a laugh.

Lastly, I would like to thank everyone in the community who has been so kind as to work with us. We are greatly appreciative of your interviews and all the information that you have shared.

Thank you,
- CHIEF EDITOR
ZACHARY OF BACKPACK GANG





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Hudson Valley Community
College Campus



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High Peaks from North Country Community College. Courtesy of Wikipedia user Mwanner

HOW TO HIKE THE HIGH PEAKS

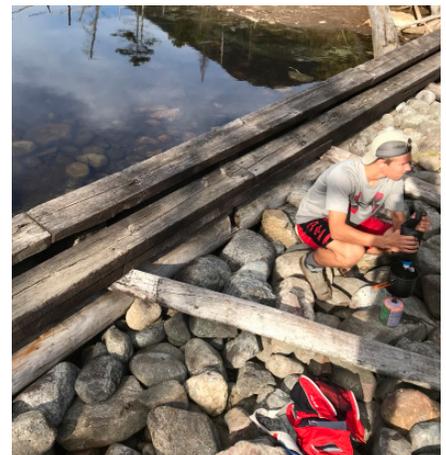
By Zachary Canaperi

Dylan Chorny ascended the last stretch of Mount Colden, relying on the rubber soles of his boots to anchor him to the sheer rock slide. As the trail flattened out, trees became sparser, revealing a panoramic view of the vast Adirondack wilderness. Chorny spent little time admiring the sight, because he was looking for the spindly wooden sign that would be at the summit. He followed the trail to a lone group of evergreens, which surrounded a tiny outcrop. Protruding from these rocks was the sign that marked the end of a long journey. For Chorny, the sign didn't represent the summit of Mount Colden. It represented all 46 Adirondack high peaks, which he had now climbed. Chorny was an Adirondack 46er.

The Adirondack Park is a vast expanse of wilderness that we are fortunate enough to have in the state of New York. Many are intimidated by the grand mountains, but they should know that with the right knowledge, almost anyone can get out there and give hiking a try.

“To become a member of the Adirondack 46er club, basically you have to climb all 46 peaks of the Adirondacks that are over 4,000 feet in elevation.”, Chorny explained. A few of these were discovered to be under 4000 feet, but are still considered high peaks, so they must be climbed. Once completed, the hiker fills out a questionnaire and receives a patch, finalizing their membership to the club. Members can participate in club meetings and activities.

The first step before taking to the trail is making sure to have the necessary gear. “You want to have hiking boots, a backpack, and a map and compass or GPS. Also, water and food.”, Chorny said. These are just the basic items that everyone needs to have with them.



Chorny getting ready for a hike

“If you don’t store your food correctly, bears can mess with your stuff...

It is also important to dress correctly and bring extra clothes. “You should really always bring rain gear, and a small tarp or waterproof blanket. They barely weigh anything,” Chorny said. He was once caught in a heavy rain for hours without a rain jacket, so he always packs one now.

Once properly equipped, there are some key things hikers should be aware of for their first time on the trail. Often, hikers underestimate the elevation gain and rugged terrain of the mountains, Chorny said. It can be intimidating to first timers when they see how steep the terrain is. The high peaks are often very rocky, with near vertical portions that require you to scramble up using your arms and legs.

People should go with a buddy for their first few times out, so they can “get a feel for their level,” Chorny said. Once people feel more comfortable and get into better shape, they can go out alone.

A beginner should start with one of the easier high peaks. Cascade, porter, and whiteface are Chorny’s top suggestions for someone new. These ones are easier because the terrain is less rocky, and the ascent is more gradual.

Other peaks such as Giant, Algonquin, and Marcy, have worse terrain and may require camping out overnight. Chorny has experience with these trips, but they aren’t for beginners. There is a whole new set of dangers associated with overnight trips. Chorny discusses one of these dangers that is relevant to the new hiker- the black bear.

“If you don’t store food correct-

ly, bears can mess with your stuff and take your food.”, Chorny. Female bears can be a serious safety hazard if their cubs are around, so it is best to put food in special containers, called bear canisters. These containers are scent proof and designed to be impossible for bears to open.

Although bears can be a nuisance, sometimes the biggest enemy can be oneself. “I get all these thoughts in my head up there all alone, and start going crazy,” Chorny said. It is crucial to replace any negative thoughts with more positive ones, he explained. Trekking for miles up a steep mountain is a daunting task, and you can only make it to the top by pushing yourself.

Chorny’s worst experience on the trail occurred during an overnight backpacking trip, where he planned to hike several peaks in two days. On his second day, he was halfway up Marshall when he realized he was behind schedule. It was going to get dark and he wouldn’t be able to find the campsite on the way back down. He backtracked down the mountain, then bushwhacked to the road. From there, he was able to hitch-hike back to his car. “I just planned more than I could handle,” Chorny said.

Hikers should use this as a lesson, and make sure to plan extra time in case anything goes wrong during a hike. It is very common that hikes will take longer than expected.

The fact that the high peaks are challenging to hike, is what makes them so rewarding to complete. There is an overwhelming sense of accomplishment when reaching the top. One can look out and see the surrounding mountains towering above the land, with miles of



Chorny and a friend hiking a trail

surrounding wilderness. For many, these views are the biggest attraction.

For Chorny, it is all about the journey, and not the destination. “It’s how I clear my mind. I like punishing myself,” Chorny said with a chuckle. Chorny always pushes himself when he hikes because it is the only way to get stronger. He keeps a steady pace and seldom takes breaks. It homes in his focus on the trail, relieving him of other life stressors.

Chorny, being finished with the high peaks, has already moved on to his next challenge. He is working on the Northeast 115, which is a collection of all 4,000 footers in the Northeast. Chorny only 48 to go, having hiked three in the Catskills, 14 in Maine, and five in Vermont. Chorny is still in college, but once he graduates, he will take on the Appalachian Trail, Pacific Crest Trail, and Continental Divide Trail. He will be one of the few people who have ever done it, granting him the triple crown.



College Students
can save over \$600!

Sustainable snow powered by Jiminy's wind turbine and solar field. Courtesy of Jiminy Peak/Facebook

SHRED THE MOUNTAIN AT JIMINY PEAK RESORT

By: Zachary Canaperi

Henry Ghent said that going to Jiminy Peak Mountain Resort is his “favorite thing to do in the winter”. College students from around the area gather at Jiminy Peak when winter comes around.

“Its cool cause you can get together with friends and do something you all like,” said Ghent, an avid snowboarder and former employee of Jiminy.

Jiminy Peak is located at the town of Hancock, Massachusetts, which is about a 40-minute drive from Albany. The mountain has 45 different trails to choose from, 21 of which are lighted and open to night skiing. Snowmaking machines have coverage on 96 percent of the trails. This allows for them to remain open, even when weather isn't ideal. Jiminy Peak offers six high speed quad lifts, three triples lifts, one double lift, and two surface lifts. Their

longest trail is the Left Bank, with a length of two miles. It traverses the mountain before angling back down to the resort. There is a total of only one double black, and seven black diamond trails, with the rest being either greens or blues. This makes Jiminy a common spot for beginners, and those who just want to have fun.

“Fun”, is exactly what Ghent said its all about at Jiminy Peak. Ghent enjoys riding at both of Jiminy's parks, where he and his friends hit the jumps, rails, and boxes. Other favorites of his are Jericho and Wild Turkey, both being expert level trails where one can gain a serious amount of speed.

Jiminy offers a special season pass for college students, called the “college pass”. The current price for the pass is \$319, which is only a fraction of the adult pass price, at \$1050. The college pass grants you the same access, which is all

day, seven days a week. Additionally, the pass holder can ski at Bromley Mountain in Vermont and Cranmore Mountain Resort New Hampshire. College students must present the pass at the ticket window, and they will be given a lift ticket for the day. This is helpful for those who live closer to the other mountains than to Jiminy.

Although the main activity at Jiminy is skiing, one can find other things to do down at the resort. There is a Fire and Fun area, where kids and adults can gather to warm up by the open fire.

The Country Inn has a restaurant and brewery (only for those 21 and older), and the adjacent Country Store has an assortment of groceries.

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FORD FIESTA ST: BARGAIN OR BUST?

By Jackson Crawford

The Ford Fiesta ST is one of those cars that has intrigued me as a potential purchase ever since I drove it for the first time in May of 2018. With the average asking price ranging from \$12-14,000 on the used market, 200hp and 200 lb/ft of torque, the car presents itself as one of the best used car bargains in its segment.

This week, I was given the opportunity to drive my friend Mike's car, a 2017 model outfitted with the optional Recaro seats, upgraded Sony sound system and Magnetic Metallic paint. The seats are comfortable and heavily bolstered, although a bit tight if you are of a larger body type. That being said, the driver's seat never felt uncomfortable to me and when going around corners I could feel the aggressive bolstering doing its job to hold me in place.

The sound system gives very clear sound quality despite a lack of low-end bass and Ford's Sync 3 system is a huge improvement over the old My Ford Touch system of the pre-2016 cars. Sync 3 now comes standard with Apple Carplay and Android Auto meaning that you can use navigation even if you didn't pay for the Ford navigation package. Many people might prefer to option the car with a sunroof but the lack of a sunroof in this car means more headroom for taller drivers which is extremely beneficial for anyone taller than six feet tall.

The car has good low-end torque for a turbo car, this is due to the small turbo that the car is equipped with which requires much less time to spool. The downside to the faster spool time is the turbo maxes out earlier in the power band. The throttle response is quick, and the car is geared well enough that it can

still accelerate in sixth gear on the highway.

I feel a need to complain about the clutch response in these cars. Much like in other Ford vehicles, the Fiesta's clutch requires you to give it a lot of gas to get it moving due to the way that their clutches grab. This was something I got used to after about Five to Ten minutes of driving, but it proved to be a bit of a pain when I first started driving it. I had a similar experience when I test drove the Fiesta's larger counterpart, the Focus ST, in September of this year.

The Fiesta handles surprisingly well for a car with a solid rear axle. While most economy cars with a solid rear axle tend to handle terribly, the Fiesta ST gives its driver great control through the corners that almost mimics the characteristics of a rear wheel drive car. How Ford's engineers were able to tune the suspension to feel so predictable while limiting understeer in a front wheel drive car is beyond anything I've ever experienced. The stiff suspension tuning also works to minimize body roll allowing the car to corner flatter but means that you feel the road surface more than you would in a base model Fiesta.

Ford has implemented a system they call a "sound symposer" which pumps intake noise from the engine bay into the cabin to give



A Red Euro Spec Fiesta ST. Photo courtesy of WSupercars.com

the driver more engine noise. While the owners of many vehicles with a similar system have complained about pumped in sound, I didn't mind it. Not only is the sound that is being pumped in real noise from the intake as opposed to the pre-recorded sound used in its competitors, but it gives a throatier noise in the cabin that you wouldn't hear otherwise due to the small engine.

Most importantly in my opinion, the stock exhaust note sounded surprisingly good. The exhaust gives you a nice raspy note when you get on the gas but isn't loud enough at idle or startup that it will be a nuisance to your neighbors when you start it up on a cold morning. The end result is a car that's quiet and reserved at low speeds but lets it hair down when you get on the gas.

The interior space makes long trips with more than 2 passengers less than ideal, but it remains comfortable for shorter trips if the vehicle isn't packed with luggage. Cargo capacity isn't fantastic, only measuring 26 cubic feet with the seats folded down but that's about average for a vehicle this size.

CONCLUSION

To sum up my experience with the Fiesta ST, I feel that the car as a complete package is an amazing deal if you are planning to buy it used. The price point of the used examples makes them obtainable for a younger audience looking for a newer enthusiast targeted vehicle. Being a fiesta, many insurance companies put it in a lower price bracket even though it is fitted with a turbo. While the Fiesta ST recommends using 93 octane fuel, the combined fuel economy of 29 MPG helps to compensate for its expensive gas habit. If you are in the market for a smaller car that is fun to drive and still affordable to use on a daily basis then I highly recommend considering the Fiesta ST.

COMFORT

6 Above Average

POWER

5 Average

FUEL ECONOMY

8 Good

FEATURES

5 Average

TOTAL VALUE

8 Good





DAN UBER'S MUSTANG STORY

By Jackson Crawford

For Dan Uber, his 2006 Ford Mustang GT is one of the most important things in his life. Dan inherited the car after his Uncle Tom passed away in 2015 and it has since served as a relic of the memories he had with his uncle. “The car to me signifies the bond that my uncle and I shared over cars” Uber said.

Dan remembers the day that his uncle got the mustang. As soon as his uncle took delivery of the car, he brought it over to show Dan. “I was eight years old and he showed up grinning ear to ear, dressed like Stephen Tyler of Aerosmith,” Uber

said. “He took me for a ride and I was hooked instantly,” He added. From that point onward, the car had earned a special place in Dan’s heart. Uber remembered when his uncle was in the hospital, he went to his uncle’s home to take the car out of storage and wash it. “I knew it would make him happy even if I did a crappy job,” Uber said.

When his Uncle Tom passed in 2015 it was stated in his will that Dan had to be 18 and financially stable before he could inherit the mustang. “I was only 16 at the time and nowhere near ready for a car like that



Dan and his Uncle

so I bided my time until I was 18 and could go get the car,” Uber said. Dan says the most significant point in his time owning the car was right after his uncle passed. His aunt gave him the pendant his uncle had made for him right before he passed. “It was an original 1964-1/2 mustang key on one end of the chain and the other end had a pendant with a compass on one side and an inscription reading ‘Daniel, don’t go faster than your angel can fly. Love Uncle Tom’” Uber said.

The mustang had been sitting in his aunt and uncle’s garage since Tom got sick, only being pulled out of its prison on one occasion so that Dan could wash it before his uncle passed. Needless to say, the car was absolutely filthy after sitting for two and a half years since it was last touched. What it really needed was patience and elbow grease to get it back in running condition. Dan gave the car a top to bottom checkup, checking over every part and replacing what was needed. “It needed new tires, an oil change, a fresh fuel filter and a deep cleaning due to eight years of nastiness caked into the paint,” Uber recalled. “You could hardly tell it was yellow” Uber added.

All his hard work finally paid off that summer when he was able to drive the Mustang to his high school graduation, a dream he has had since he was a kid. “My uncle always wanted to be a part of it, so driving to graduation in the car felt like he was there with me riding shotgun,” Uber said. Dan drove the mustang to his college graduation two years later, this time with his fiancé riding in the passenger seat.

It wasn’t long before Dan began to make the car his own. He replaced the seats, tinted the windows, installed a bigger intake and installed some upgraded engine components. He later decided to change the wheels and the tail lights on the car and upgraded

the factory radio to a Sony head unit with a 6.5-inch touchscreen. However, his favorite modification by far is the Borla Atak exhaust he installed on the car. “It may not be the fastest car out on the road but when you put the pedal to the floor, that engine comes to life,” Uber stated. “A noise like no other erupts out of those pipes, racketing off backfires and screaming to redline,” He said with a grin on his face.

It’s obvious at this point that this car holds a special place in Dan’s life. “Not only is it one of the ways I can spend time with my uncle but doing so is a family affair and has become one of the biggest parts of me,” Uber stated. “It’s one of the first things I get asked about when I talk to someone, only bested by ‘How is your fiancé?’” Uber continued. His fiancé, Beth, loves the car as well. She accompanies Dan when they go to car shows and she joins him when he cruises around to enjoy the car on beautiful days. One of their favorite destinations to drive to is up to Lake George where they can cruise up and down Main Street. “She knows what the car means to me and loves it even more for that reason” Uber said.

In Dan’s opinion his Mustang in essence is a representation of himself and how he has grown as a person. He says this all stems back to how he grew up. “I wasn’t overly popular as a kid,” Uber said. “I was bullied quite a lot for my appearance growing up,” He added. “For once I was able to take something worse off than I was and breathe life into it, like Rembrandt with a blank canvas or Mozart with a brand-new piano,” He said. In a way, Dan was able to do for his mustang what his uncle had done for him growing up. He took a car that had sat in a garage for years and gave it the time it needed to become something better than just the sum of its parts.

Dan Uber plans on many years to come enjoying and appreciating his car for the beast it truly is, exactly as he wishes his uncle had been able to do. If you listen carefully enough, you may be able to hear him thundering down a backroad with his fiancé riding shotgun and his uncle guiding the way. Move out of the way everyone because the Boss is back!



Dan and his Fiancée, Beth.



MEATS, HOT SAUCES, AND SEASONING

By Griffin Bengraff

I've traveled cross-country from Maine to Montana. I've noticed two things the closer you are to the midwest; more guns, and better beef jerky.

It was a year ago when I was driving with a friend in Colonie when we saw a bright and inviting sign that said something about beef jerky. As jerky enthusiasts, and stereotypical red blooded americans, we felt it necessary to check it out. Stepping into the store, we were pelted with a new store smell, scanning the room with every beef jerky imaginable on almost every wall except for one -- the hot sauce wall. Not only have I seen so much peppered, smoked and

spiced jerkied meat in a room before, but hot sauces.

The Beef Jerky Outlet on New Loudon Rd in Colonie opened early 2017, and since then has been booming, gaining rapid traction in a previously beef-jerky-less northeastern United States.

The Outlet is a franchise that has quality jerky products from all from their own factories midwest to the south that including beef, venison, salmon, and even alligator. They have free samples to taste, an entire wall dedicated to classic and hard to find hot sauces seen on Hot Ones, seasonings, and much more.

The unsuspecting owner, Mark Kinnally is a Guilderland teacher and coach who previously no retail or entrepreneurial experience.

Mark got started with the idea when he was on vacation with his family in Myrtle Beach. After getting some jerky and meeting an owner of the franchise, he got talking with him. "We got talking and he mentioned how many people from the north saying how they wish they had one of these where they live," Mark says.

“We don’t look at it as a store, it’s more of a destination.”

“I called a couple buddies of mine, we talked about it, and before I know it I’m being toured around their factories and interviewed in Knoxville Tennessee,” he continued.

While he was there he was impressed by the quality and demand of the products. “I never truly realized how much variety there was,” Mark says. “I mean, I grew up with a slim jim you know what I mean?” he continued.

Within a couple months, Mark was awarded the first store in New York State.

Mark took a leap of faith opening something so prominently midwest, being a pioneer bringing the industry to this region. Even further he added hot sauces which was an equal draw to the store.

One of the big reasons their product is different from the competition and has

been so successful is the large size and quality of the pieces. Talking about the process he says, “Other companies have the scraps, we specifically use the top loin.” The top loin he’s referring to is known to yield the most tender and expensive cut of beef you can find.

The process of making the jerky is all from their own factories, using their unique method. “It takes 3 pounds of meat to make 1 pound of jerky,” Mark says.

“When it comes out of the dehydrator it has to be packaged by 5 o’ clock that day, or it gets thrown out,” he adds.

From their factories in Michigan and Tennessee their products get delivered right to their stores for people to enjoy.

“I come at bare minimum twice a year, once for Fathers Day and once for Christmas,” a satisfied customer says. “The biggest thing for me is that we previously didn’t have this quality of beef jerky up here. The best you could find was some average jerky at a grocery store,” she continues.

Regarding the product line it’s

easy to say it’s not average jerky you stop in and get quickly. “We don’t look at it as a store, it’s more of a destination,” the owner says.

“It’s not the kind of place where you run in for 5 minutes, you walk around, taste stuff, chat,” he says.

Now at one of the top 100 franchises in the country, the Beef Jerky Outlet locations are peppered around the US and soon is on track to be coast to coast.

Besides their flagship product, they even have another hold in the market-hot sauces. “We have people that drive from all over the state just for the hot sauces alone.”

In the future, Mark says hot sauce tasting contests are something to look forward to.

“We have people come in who have wing parties where they’ll have 5 different stations of hot sauces. Mild to flaming,” Mark says audably amused.

The culture he’s referring to is hot sauce culture, arguably popularized by Sean Evan’s show on YouTube, Hot Ones. The premise of the show an interview with guests (usually celebrities) over a platter of increasingly spicy wings.

Guests include Seth Rogen, Terry Crews, Jack Black, Wanda Sykes, and more.

The location in Colonie is a family owned and community run. The owners are family, and Mark employs students and as a coach some of his players.

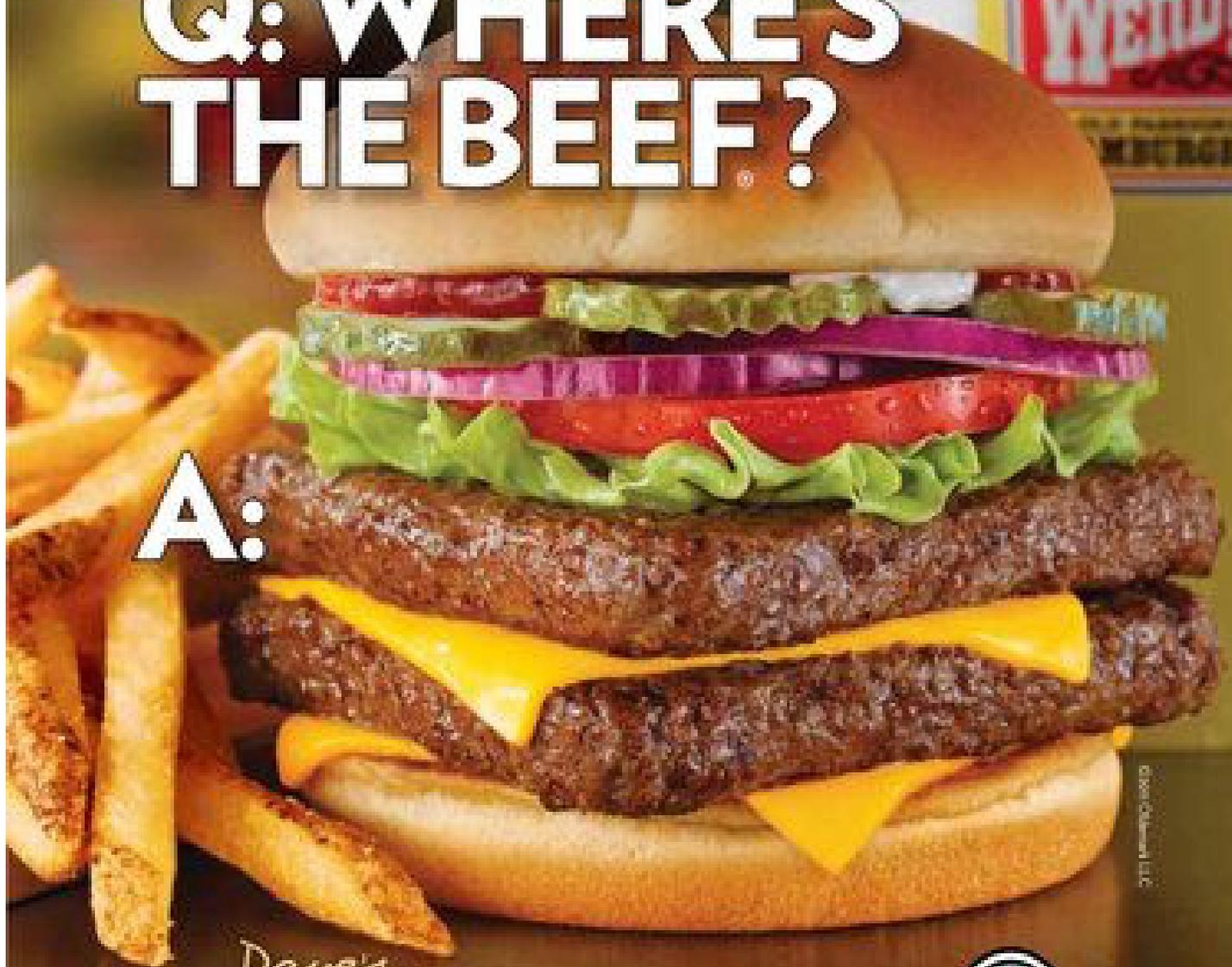


A selection of assorted jerkies with free tasting in the hot zone
Photography courtesy of Jesse Varner

NEW

Q: WHERE'S THE BEEF?

A:



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Dave's
HOT 'N JUICY
CHEESEBURGERS

HERE'S THE BEEF.™

We've gone back to the grill to make our classic cheeseburgers thicker, hotter and juicier than ever. They're 100% North American beef. And, we've added new premium toppings and a buttered, toasted bun. The way it should be.



EATING CHEAP ON CAMPUS

By Griffin Bengraff

Food. We all need it, want it and love it, but as college students we need to afford it.

With a majority of college students working minimum wage, 38 percent of students reported their biggest expense is food, according to aa 2016 College Student and Personal Finance Study.

So, instead of looking up cheap food I decided to go around campus and find out what students are really eating.

“To be honest, most days I just go to Wendy’s,” a digital media student says in the Campus center. “Depends what I have time for. Some days if I’m in a hurry I’ll go here just because it’s quick,” he adds.

Out of the 10 people I asked, the responses were more or less the same, whatever is fast and cheap. But what really is the cheapest?

In a survey of 56 students, they were asked in their experience what is the cheapest fast food place near Hudson Valley and there’s definitely a winner.

Ringing up to a close second is Taco Bell. With their carb filled \$1 burritos and \$5 boxes they deliver a good price for a decent amount of food. “I’m ashamed to say I find myself driving to Taco Bell and just eating in my car a lot,” an anonymous student says.

As a test I personally went to Taco Bell to find out if a \$5 dollar box could fill me up and the results are a definite yes. Although don’t be tricked, one regular to Taco Bell says that in their experience skipping out on the drink is better for you and your wallet

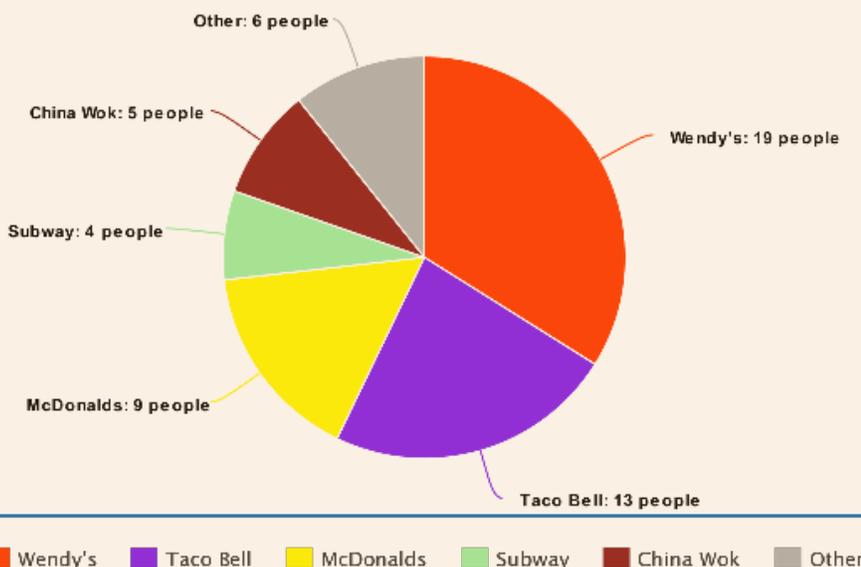
.The winner of fast and cheap among students goes to Wendy’s.

“Their ‘4 for 4’ is ridiculous,” a student says. “You get a sandwich, nuggets, fries and a drink for all under \$5,” he excitedly continues.

As of December 2018, a Dave’s Single with Cheese is \$4.19 which is just under what you’d be paying for the ‘4 for 4’ deal, which now is increased to a ‘4 for \$4.44’.

“I go to Wendy’s often and I always see the same guy at the drive through probably just judging me so hard,” a student says.

From all the responses I find guilt is the most common throughout, so the real question is- is the guilt worth it?



“Whats the cheapest and most filling fast food around Campus?”

On the left are results of a survey of 56 students in Hudson Valley Community College.



THE INFLUENCE OF SPORTS ACROSS THE CAPITAL REGION

By Hunter McIntyre

The capital district is packed full of ways for sports fans to get their fix. Filled with division 1 sports and Pro/Semi pro leagues. However some provide better experiences than others and knowing which events are more enjoyable will certainly help average sports fan or college student find what they're looking for.

"My favorite sporting event in the capital district is probably the valley cats, baseball was one of my favorite sports as a kid and personally I find the games to be very stress relieving." said Jack Parker a University of Albany student. Going to a Valleycats game is one of the staples of capital district athletics. Tickets are generally under 10\$ and there isn't really a bad seat in the Joe Bruno stadium. Plus the cats have had multiple great MLB players pass through such as Dallas Keuchel of the Houston Astros and J.D Martinez on the Boston Red Sox.

"Well for college students I think the appeal of the Valleycats is the price since tickets generally go for

// I thought the first year was awesome, they had block parties before the games which was cool and the Times Union center seemed to be packed for a lot of the games

around 10\$, it's cheap and the cats are generally pretty competitive." Parker continued The Tri City Valleycats who were this year's New York Penn League champion also offer discounted tickets on occasion for UAlbany, Siena, and Hudson Valley Community College students. "I've been to countless Valleycats games over the years and have never had a bad time or regretted going, except maybe on the odd occasion that its rained" said Jakob Mills of North Greenbush UAlbany football is another great experience capital district has to offer.

It is also very affordable as tickets

start at around 15\$.

They play in NCAA Div 1 Colonial Athletic Association meaning they play bigger teams like Pittsburgh, Stony Brook, and Rhode Island.

"Unfortunately we aren't very good this year but we've been really competitive in the past, I'm not saying it's not a good time because it is but it's always fun when your team is winning" said Mr. Miles a parent of a UAlbany student.

"I think it's a great time because of the atmosphere, people cheering and the crowd really make it fun but who doesn't like sitting down and watching some division one football." he continued

UAlbany football is an inexpensive way to watch some games but foot-

ball is not the only division one sport at UAlbany.

UAlbany basketball is also division one and plays on campus at the SEFCU arena. They play in the America East division.

“I don’t know If I could choose between the two teams they’re both a great time but I guess I’d have to go with Basketball just because I enjoyed it when I was younger plus weather doesn’t play a factor in the arena.” Said John Ridley an alumni.

Like the football program the basketball also plays bigger schools such as Providence, Kent State and Stony Brook.

Ridley also mention that the sporting events were some of the best events on campus.

“I think what made them so fun was that you can just show up with a bunch of your friends and yell about sports for a couple hours” Ridley jokes.

If basketball or football aren’t your thing then UAlbany also offers division one lacrosse in the spring. They are generally had the Thompson brothers play for them who both were drafted and play for the MLL (Major League Lacrosse)

Another local college Siena in Loudonville also features division one basketball.

Siena plays for the Metro Atlantic Athletic Division and plays teams like Marist and Providence. Tickets generally go for around 10 to 30\$ similarly to UAlbanys basketball and football teams.

The capital district also claims its own recently started arena football team the Albany Empire. They are currently the only professional team to play in the times union center. 2018 was the teams inaugural season and competes with the other 3 AFL team from Baltimore, Philadelphia and Washington.

“I thought the first year was awesome, they had block parties before the games which was cool and the times union center seemed to be packed for a lot of the games surprisingly” stated long time Albany resident Jaquon Smith

Albany Empire tickets tend to run a bit more expensive generally being around 25\$ per ticket.

“I remember when they used to be the conquest and then the fire-birds, I wasn’t into as much back then but since the Devils left It’s nice to see another professional team come to albany ” Smith said

The capital district is also known for their various hockey programs. Both Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and Union College in Schenectady have their own Division one hockey programs.

RPI plays at the Houston Fieldhouse in Troy.

“RPI hockey games are great, i’ve been going for 12 years and it’s always great with the band and student section making as much noise as possible.” said Sheila Enstrom RPI is a prominent team in the country and has had various players go on to the NHL including hall of famer Adam Oates.



The RPI Engineers with a shot on goal. Photo courtesy of Robert Dungan and Times Union

“In my opinion the best games to attend are The Big Red Freakout and the mayor’s cup both events are highly attended and often fights break out between the teams, I remember a few years ago the coaches actually got involved in an altercation on the Ice” Enstrom Continued

The mayor’s cup is played every year between bitter rivals RPI and Union and is regarded as one of the best sporting events in the capital district. Unions division one program is also very successful as they won the NCAA tournament in 2014 led by Shayne Gostisbehere who now plays for the Philadelphia Flyers.

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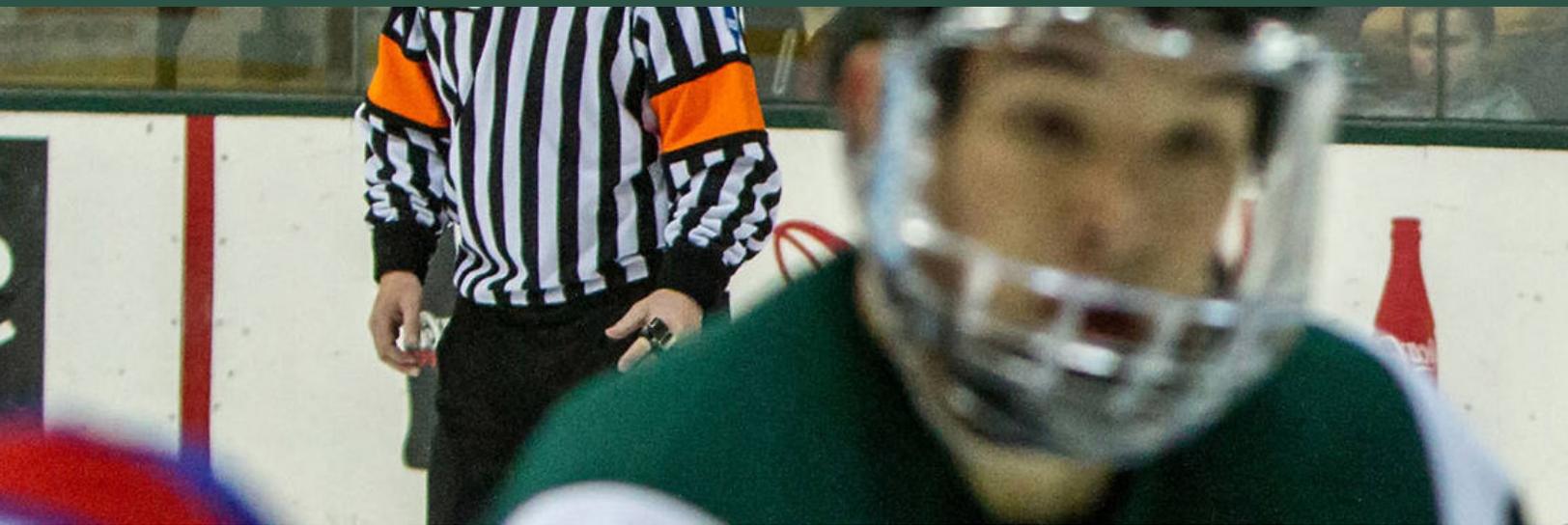
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CAPITAL REGION HOCKEY FAILS TO IMPRESS

By Hunter McIntyre

This year has so far been a disappointment for both Union and RPI hockey fans. While both teams are struggling so far it is only 13 games into the season and both teams have the chance to turn it around. Both RPI and Union are sitting about middle of the table at 6th and 7th respectively. Most recently RPI has been struggling on the offensive end. Their leading scorer Jacob Hayhurst currently sits only 9th in the ECAC in all around scoring with 13 points in 13 games but nobody else on RPI's roster sits in the top 44 scorers. A potential problem to say the least. "Well there's two measuring sticks, ones in the league the other is out of the league (Competition) so I want to win every game, I want the process to be good I wanna play hard and effectively I wanna take another step and further our pro-

gram" said RPI coach Dave Smith (Via RPI Athletics)

Fans of the team have been concerned over the lack of scoring "I don't think we were playing as hard as we can I look out there and only two of the four lines appear like they are even trying, I mean every team we face doesn't have a great goalie or defense so why aren't we scoring" and anonymous RPI fan stated

RPI's goalie Linden Marshall is also ranked 14th out of 15 in save percentage adding to their woes. However RPI still has games left and the coach and players seem motivated to give it their best. Union College of Schenectady is more in tune with their offensive pace as their highest scorer Cole Maier is tied for 9th in the league. Brett Supinski is only tied for 16th in the ECAC with teammate Ryan

Walker. However their attack does appear stronger than RPI's as Union has numerous players in the top 44. Leading it to most likely be Union's defense that is playing a role in their struggles as their goalie Darion Hanson is currently ranked 2nd in the league for save percentage.

"For the most part I think these guys are pretty plugged in you know not trying to be cute, you know I steal it from the old cowboys coach Jimmy Johnson let's not be cute, let's be good" said Union head coach Rick Bennett

Both teams seem confident in their ability to finish the season strong and even if they aren't the fans have the annual Mayor's cup to look forward to in January where the bitter rivals will be looking to make a statement. Both teams are fighting to get better but we'll have to wait and see who comes out on top.





ADOPT A FAMILY FUNDRAISER

By Jackson Crawford

The third annual Adopt A Family Fundraiser is scheduled to take place this December in Troy New York. Several local businesses have stepped in this year to help collect donations for the event including: 1945 Speed and Custom, Tried and True Tattoo, and Spectrum. Donations will be accepted through these locations until December 20th with gifts for the family being purchased on December 21st.

The event was founded in 2016 by Raymond Dufresne, Dan Laroe and Jay Toch after they had hosted a fundraiser for the family of a young man who had died the previous month. While it was great that they could help the family, the group felt that they could do more to help the community. "At the time, I was in another car club and one year one of the members donated a thanksgiving dinner to a family in need," Dufresne said.

Intrigued by the idea of donating a holiday to those in need, Raymond reached out to his friends and proposed the idea for a Christmas fundraiser. The idea was well received by his colleagues and they started gathering donations and a small group of people. The first year started small with a group of seven to ten volunteers. The following year grew significantly with 15 volunteers helping to buy, wrap and deliver the gifts to the family. That year, the group convoyed from Walmart to the home of the family to deliver the gifts to two very surprised boys.

The primary goal of the event is to help those in need and give the kids a Christmas they will never forget. "I don't think anyone knew what they were getting into in terms of the emotional factor the first year we did this," Dan Laroe said. "It's super rewarding and super humbling to be able to help out," He added. "It makes you realize Christmas is more about giving."

With the event growing each year and people of all ages getting involved, the event organizers are

looking to develop it into something bigger that will last for years to come. "It would be really cool to bring the family out to dinner or be able to donate to multiple families over the course of the year," Jay Toch said. "The support we get for this event, the more we can give back," he added.

Next year, they would like the fundraiser to evolve into a community event where everyone can get together and celebrate the holidays together. "A lot of us in the community have small families or family who live out of state," Toch said. "I want everyone to have a place to spend the holidays," Toch added.

If you are interested in donating to the Adopt A Family event, you can give monetary donations through the participating businesses or by reaching out to Dufresne, Laroe or Toch on Facebook. An event page on Facebook has been setup for the event to give updates for those looking to volunteer the night of the gift delivery.

Children's Foundation

Adopt-A-Family Program How it Works

Adopt-A-Family (AAF) matches families in need in Guelph and Wellington County with community donors who provide them with gifts and grocery cards for the Christmas season.

1



Social workers and community agencies refer families in need to the AAF Program. The referral includes a list of specific needs and wishes for each child.

- ★ Social agencies are able to identify the families who are most in need and work closely with them to make sure they will have what they need to make the holidays special.

2



AAF volunteers check the Christmas Holiday Bureau to make sure the family isn't already being helped by another holiday program.

- ★ Checking ensures that as many families as possible are helped across the community.

3



AAF volunteers match donors with families to "adopt" for Christmas.

- ★ Volunteers take pride in making matches that will create the most meaningful holiday season for everyone.

6



AAF volunteers check everything twice to make sure it's all just right before wrapping the family's gifts for delivery.

- ★ Donors can rest assured that everything they have purchased goes to their family with a bow on top (and batteries for toys included!)

5



The donor brings the gifts to AAF Santa's Workshop.

- ★ The magic of the holiday season is evident when joyful AAF volunteers greet the donor to accept the gifts personally selected for their adopted family.

4



The donor goes shopping providing some "needs" and "wishes" for the children, a small gift for the parent(s)/guardian(s), and grocery cards (\$25/person).

- ★ Donors love knowing that they are helping a specific family in their community and that the gifts they buy are exactly what the kids are wishing for.

7



The referring social worker delivers the family's gifts.

- ★ This is a wonderful opportunity for the social worker to share in a warm and positive experience with the family they are supporting.

8



On Christmas morning, and throughout the holiday season, everyone – the family, social worker, volunteers, and donor – share in the joy of creating special memories.



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