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The Official Newsletter of the Ashdown Community



Ashdown House Executive Board Committee Mid-Year Update By: Amanda Zangari

Last year, AHEC's main goal was to transition Ashdown successfully to its new home in NW35. This year, AHEC set improving internal Ashdown events to be its main priority.

By and large, we have been very successful. Between orientation, Coffee Hour, The Cherry Pie Society, outings, and yoga classes (to name just a few things this fall), a lot of great new events have occurred. At the same time, campus wide events such as the cultural dinner series, our large dance parties and brunch have continued to occur Nevertheless, attendance at events such as coffee hour has dropped dramatically since the move from W1.

Why do fewer people attend events now than two years ago if there are 200 more students in the new building? It certainly isn't for lack of opportunity to do things.

We've come up with several reasons. Firstly, W1's central location made going home for dinner or coffee hour a lot easier. You could stop in for a study break and return to lab as quickly as you could have gone to LaVerde's for a sandwich. Secondly, events like coffee hour work best when you come to hang out with the people you know. When you know no one, it's awkward. The social courage to make new friends and sit with new people also ends around the same time orientation does, so if you don't see someone you know, why go to coffee hour? Or rather, why stay after you've grabbed your plate of free food?

Therein lies the problem. On a day to day basis, you see fewer people in new Ashdown. In the old Ashdown, most people shared bedrooms and everyone shared a kitchen. The rent was cheaper, but there was no A/C and a sartorially acknowledged rodent problem. The living situation was designed so that people saw each other

all the time, knew each other, and went to coffee hour to see each other. Now we are in a building of single apartments that are attractive for the room condition and the privacy, not for the community.

The common spaces in the building are behind closed doors and out of the walking path for many residents. You don't meet people unless you are looking for them, which make for a less than ideal situation. You may not know this, but past AHECs fought many very difficult battles with the administration when the NW35 move was proposed. Originally, the new building was to contain no common space besides the laundry room. We're lucky to have what we do, and it's because the students who came before us cared deeply.

Now, like most residents of this building, I never lived in old Ashdown. I'm glad I don't share a bedroom with anyone (or anything). I loathed having to haul my pots and pans to a common kitchen to find I forgot one vital thing after I started cooking, so I'm glad to have a kitchen in my apartment. However, I know how common facilities bring people together, something especially important as technology makes it easier to be anti-social.

Last spring, as I came home, my roommate was leaving. She was upset because the person next door was playing a musical instrument and she could not concentrate on her work. I banged on her bedroom wall. The music stopped and our neighbor came over to apologize. As it turned out, the neighbor was not only from my department, but in the five person class

I was taking that semester. I had no clue that he lived in Ashdown, let alone next door to me. He was mortified that he was bothering my roommate, but I was mortified I didn't know it was him. That made him the first neighbor of mine I knew.

I see this issue not as an issue with the residents themselves, the amount of work students do, or the quality of programming we've put on along with a spectacular team of officers, but an engineering problem: apartment-style housing does not lend itself to casual interaction. Aside from putting on great events, how can we work around it? How can residents who live in apartments to not only meet their neighbors, but know them? To me, the success of coffee hour (and our community) is not the number of people who go, but the number of people who are still there a half hour after the food has been taken away.

We don't have an easy answer to this problem yet. AHEC is looking for one though, and we'd love to hear from you.

Amanda Zangari AHEC Secretary

The Ashdown House Executive Committee holds meetings every Thursday in the Crafts Lounge at 7:30. AHEC meetings are open to the entire Ashdown community, and deal with programming as well as dorm wide issues.

Boston Activities

By: Syed Ali

I love Boston. It's probably with a little bias that I say it's one of the, if not the greatest city in the US (did I say a little bias?). Even though I've lived in Mass and near Boston for most of my life, I have traveled to and lived in or near a lot of cities around the world. Given that experience, I'm still hard pressed to name another place with the unique blend that Boston provides. It has the historical significance, diversity of culture, and a modern relevance few places can claim. With thousands of college students, traditional and modern industries, and some terrific sports teams, Boston is a cultural hot bed which exudes the vibrancy of a metropolis while still providing a homely feeling. But what about the coming winter and cold you ask? Tish, tosh. Another reason Boston is awesome is because of all the fun you can have despite (and in some cases because of) the cold. So what follows is a small list of the activities I strongly encourage you to take part in during the coming months.

Dance Fever at Havannah Club: Need a fun way to spend that Friday or Saturday night? If yes, then check out the party at the Havannah Club on 288 Green St in Central Square. The club is usually packed with energetic people

Latin dancing the night away. Best part, no experience necessary because from 9-10pm on Fridays and Saturdays lessons are offered and no partner needed.

Ice Skating on Frog Pond: They say "when life gives you lemons, make lemonade." So if life is throwing ice your way...skate on it! The frozen Frog Pond in Boston Common is a terrific way to enjoy the Common during the winter months. Costing as little as \$12 for admission and skate rentals, it is a great idea for a date or whiling away a chilly afternoon with friends. Best of all, after you get all hungry getting your skate on, you can follow the Frog Pond's website's (www.bostoncommonfrogpond.org/) advice by enjoying the varied restaurant options nearby.



"It has the historical significance, diversity of culture, and a places can claim. he diversity of culture, and a modern relevance few can a modern relevance few places can claim."

Cheer on the Big Green Machine: I

did mention the sports teams right? Even though the Red Sox season is over and Patriot's home games are few and far between, the Boston Garden is home to the Celtics (basketball) and Bruins (ice hockey). Watching a home game of either team is a great time, but since I'm a bigger basketball fan, I'm going to pitch the Celtics. This year's squad has Kevin Garnett back and a loaded bench. Even though tickets are more expensive compared to the early 2000's, it is a small price to pay (figuratively speaking) for having a winning team. Banner # 18!!!

The above are a just a few personal suggestions, for more ideas check out www.cityofboston.gov. Like I said, Boston is the best, so enjoy it!!

Chichi's Teach for America Experience

By: Chinenye Aguoji

I spent the last two years teaching 7th grade math through a program called Teach For America (TFA). TFA is a program which recruits high-performing undergraduates and leaders to place them in underperforming or 'failing' schools. After graduating from Dartmouth I wasn't sure what I wanted to do next but I knew I definitely wanted to have an impact. TFA appealed to me for a few reasons. For one, I was familiar with the neighborhoods which were served by the program. My family emigrated from Nigeria when I was 6 and we lived in

East New York for a while before moving to settle in Bed-Stuy. TFA served schools in the same district of my elementary school. This really hit home for me because although the schools weren't failing when I attended them, they could've been and I could easily be in the shoes of the students who attended these schools. I felt given the fact that I had grown up and attended schools within this neighborhood, it was my duty to give back and to act as somewhat of a resource in helping to shape the futures of the children in these neighborhoods.

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Another reason TFA appealed to me was because of the manner in which they went about achieving their mission. TFA believes in relentless pursuit of results.

At first glance, these words may not mean much but serving as a teacher within the program and facing the battle that is trying to teach students in low-income neighborhoods one quickly begins to grasp how important it is to be resilient throughout the process. Knowing that there

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would be a community of people to help me along the way and more who were also going through what I was going through in the program allowed me to not only feel comfortable making the transition from student to teacher, but to know that it was best if I made that transition within the scope of TFA. Looking back I would definitely do it over again, but I

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think that ultimately I know that teaching is not for me. I think that what I came to enjoy about the job more than anything was really the one-to-one interaction I had with students. I thrived off this, I was able to get a real life understanding of the impact that I was having through the child's eyes. This aspect that I enjoyed so much led me to begin tutoring while I taught. As a teacher I got to interact with students one-on-one maybe 10% of the time but as a student I was interacting with students 100% of the time and that was what I wanted, to be able to truly get a measurable real-time sense of how my actions were making a difference.

Currently I'm at Sloan getting my MBA and to expand my skill-set I'm going to go into finance, but ultimately I think my past experience as a teacher and as a tutor will lead me to someday start my own tutoring agency for inner-city children. I hope however, that despite being the CEO of the agency, I won't get bogged down with bills and to-do lists but that instead I'll be able to continue doing what I enjoy doing most which is interacting with students on a one-to-one level.

IT Committee Update

By: IT Committee

Not as many other committees serving and interacting with Ashdown residents face to face, the IT committee plays an invisible role maintaining Ashdown's IT infrastructure, including our web site and printers.

First of all, we would like to let all the residents know two important changes about printing starting from this semester.

First, we have launched an automatic accounting system for printing. Any resident in Ashdown is allowed to print up to 100 pages per month using the Athena workstations on the second floor. Once you have printed over the quota, your printing privilege in Ashdown will be suspended for a month. You can always check how many quota you still have in "view my info" in Ashdown's web site http:// ashdown.mit.edu. Please note that the quota shown on the web site is updated every Sunday based on the data provided by IS&T; therefore, the number you see may be higher than

the real quota you have.

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Second, our Athena workstations have been upgraded to Debathena. This changes the way how you print at Ashdown. From now on, please select "Print to LPR" instead of finding Ashdown's printers in the long list of



printers.

As we learned so far, some programs, such as OpenOffice, do not have the option "Print to LPR". In such case, you can print the file to a PDF, and then print the PDF as you print regular PDFs.

Last but not least, currently, the IT committee is working on two new projects: one is an automatic news releasing system, which will enable officers of Ashdown to post news or announcements on the web site easily; the other project will be a monitoring system, which will allow people to check the availability of the two pianos via the website. If you have any suggestions or ideas, please let us know. We'll try our best to fit your needs. Thanks.

IT Committee

COME TRY THE THIRSTY EAR KITCHEN

...where else can you get a burger and a pint for less than \$10.

Pub Hours: Monday-Friday 7:00pm-1:00am

Kitchen Hours: Monday-Friday 7:00pm-11:00pm

Nachos, Chicken wings, Chips and Salsa starting at \$3.00



Burgers, Reubens, Quesadillas, Pasta, and Salads starting at \$5.00

French Fries, Sweet Potato Fries, Onion Rings, and Steamed Broccoli starting at \$2.00



View our full menu and weekly events online at http://thirsty-ear.mit.edu

Website <u>http://ashdown.mit.edu/</u>