

## The Official Newsletter of the Ashdown Community

### Message from the Editor

Hello Readers,

It's Sakul again. For those who are new to this publication, 1) I'm the Newsletter Officer for the 2012-2013 academic year; 2) You must be new to Ashdown (welcome!); 3) ... or you've been in Ashdown for a while and never bothered to read the Newsletter until now. (Did you misclick something? Just kidding!) Thanks for reading in any case! And for those who have read this newsletter before, thanks for coming back!

In this issue, we have the Summer Writing Contest (tell us stuff about your research!), the second installment of the surprisingly popular Puzzler Twins (each e-mail I got made me very happy! This new one should be much harder to crack, mwahaha), a narrative of the escapades on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July right here in Ashdown (barbecues are dangerous!), a report on a Chinese Comedy Event (laughter across culture!), a tale of rescue on the Charles River (the river was being rescued), and our regular Funny Caption Contest (win money!) and Kids' Corner (oh, those kids).

Wow, that second paragraph was one long sentence. TL;DR is below. Also, there are lots of chances to win/earn money for your contributions, so keep on reading!

Happy reading!

Sakul Ratanalert

Ashdown Newsletter Officer (ashdown-newsletter@mit.edu)

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### Ashdown Summer Writing Contest

In **less than 1000 words**, talk about how your research is making a difference to the world in a way that someone else not from MIT can understand it. The judging criteria are (on the next page):

- 1) Accessibility to a completely non-technical audience
- 2) Effectiveness of message

**Word limit:** 1000 words

**Eligibility:** All Ashdown residents are welcome to participate.

**Submit by:** ~~August 31~~ **September 30, 2012**

**PRIZES:** **\$25 gift card to Amazon** for the winner

**\$10 gift card to Amazon** for each of the two runners-up

**Publication** in the Ashdown Newsletter, "3am" for all essays of merit.

## Ash and Dawn, the Puzzler Twins – #2

*Ash and Dawn are MIT first-year graduate students, and recently moved into Ashdown. Their stories will be chronicled in the upcoming issues. Each story has a **SECRET CODE WORD**. The first **three** people to e-mail the Editor (at [ashdown-newsletter@mit.edu](mailto:ashdown-newsletter@mit.edu), not his personal one) the correct **SECRET CODE WORD** by **August 31, 2012** will win a **\$10 gift card to Amazon**. **FIND THE SECRET CODE WORD AND WIN!!** (The **SECRET CODE WORD** can be found on [Dictionary.com](http://Dictionary.com). No anagramming is necessary unless otherwise stated.)*

The Fourth of July in Cambridge was very ... wet. Instead of going out in the storm to watch the fireworks, Ash and Dawn decided to artistically express themselves. Ash, having taken some printing classes, produced the following series of prints:



Dawn was very inspired by all the patriotism of Ash's work, with the beautiful stars, fireworks, flags, and sparkles, so she composed a waltz for the cello, the first few bars shown above.

*What's the SECRET CODE WORD? (Puzzle designed by Sakul Ratanaalert)*

*June 2012 Issue Winners: **Amanda Zangari, Aarthy Adityan, and Alan Benson** for being the first three to correctly submit the secret code word "MANATEE" to last month's puzzle (Solution on last page of this publication). Congratulations, you three! Please e-mail the Editor to receive your gift cards. And thanks to everyone who submitted!*

# Mission Impossible: Ashdown 4th of July BBQ

**The Mission:** feeding 500 or more hungry people coming to Ashdown for a holiday barbecue.

## The Mission Report:

The Social Committee was in shambles. Out of the five members, both co-chairs were gone for the summer. One person would be out of town the morning of the barbecue, and another would be out the entire day. It was all up to Richard. (Okay, so the guy who was going to be out the entire 4<sup>th</sup> of July was available the day before during the crucial purchasing period, and the barbecue wasn't until the afternoon so the morning-absent guy would just miss the set-up. And there were some wrangled volunteers to help out, too. But still, pretty stressful.)

During the early planning stages, funding was applied for through a GSC grant and Ashdown support, and the logistics of food purchase was worked out. The day before, Ron drove to Costco with two volunteers with the biggest Zipcar he could rent. Among the stuff purchased: burgers, hot dogs, bread, utensils, chips, fruit, etc. With three round trips, the \$2000 worth of food was safely tucked away into the Thirsty Ear Fridge for the next day. I was told to emphasize the sheer amount of food, so here goes:



## Mission Impossible (cont.)

At the crack of dawn (actually 8:00), the Coffee Hour and Brunch Committees began chopping fruits, vegetables, and anything that needed cutting down to size (Did anyone else notice that a table in the Hulsizer was missing? And that large pile of metal and wood that appeared the exact same spot that day? Me neither.) Matt manned the grill in the Thirsty Ear, and the grill outside was started up around 9:00. The morning drizzle did not help in grill-lighting.

At first, everyone was chatty, cutting food with musical accompaniment and socializing made time fly by. The nerdiness of trying to optimize operations (this is MIT, after all), kept Shabnam and Richard's spirits high as they tried not to look at all the accumulating grease that 800 burgers and 800 hot dogs produced when grilled.



Past the three hour mark, however, things became more arduous. People began to line up around 11:30, and were finally let in at 12:15. They looked pretty pleased with the spread, and little did they know the Social Committee had planned a menu of relatively healthy foods, so the community would eat well for the holiday. Should have reminded them it was the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, not the 1<sup>st</sup> of April.



**The Mission Evaluation:** Good job, team!

**The Mission Team:** Aarthy Adityan, Shabnam Ardakani, Godine Chan, Apple Chawanthayatham, Chidube Ezeozue, Shengran Feng, Matt Haberland, Kevin Kung, Emma Liu, Brandon Luders, Joshua Marion, Evelina Polyzoeva, David Wang, Yuran Wang, Ron Wilcox, Wei Yu, Richard Zhang.

*Photos courtesy of Aarthy Adityan. Contributions to article by Richard Zhang.*

## Chinese Comedy Night (Xiangsheng Show)



by Yuanyuan Cui

If you happened to pass by the Hulsizer Room on the night of June 16<sup>th</sup>, you might have wondered about the loud nonstop laughter from inside. It was the second stand-up comedy night brought to us by the newly founded Fuyun Chinese Comedy Club, and MIT student group dedicated to Chinese stand-up comedy. Traditionally known as *Xiangsheng*, or “cross talks”, Chinese stand-up comedy has been one of China’s most popular performing art since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The language used in *Xiangsheng*, rich in puns and allusions, is delivered in a rapid and bantering style.

This particular show consisted of five performances by eight members of the club. Featured in the show are comedians mimicking clumsy fortune tellers, who messed up with their customers; the life of a broken man chasing after girls after breaking up with his ex-girlfriend; and stories of a car mechanic driving an antique car he is proud of, only to find it breaking down multiple times on the highway.



Photos courtesy of Yuanyuan Cui.

Over 100 fans came to enjoy the show, some of whom drove long hours to see the performance. Molu Shi, the chair and founder of the club and a 3<sup>rd</sup> year PhD student in Course 8, said he thinks *Xiangsheng* can be an excellent way to teach the rich culture behind the Chinese language. He hopes there will be more non-Chinese students involved in the club in the future. “We are always recruiting,” Molu said.

The next open show from the club will be held in mid September.

# Charles River Water Chestnut Removal Event

*He Wang is the Ashdown Environmental and Community Service Officer. He answered a few questions for us about the awesome event he organized.*



*Above, He displays a specimen of the water chestnut plant. Right, the evil seed that floats like a buoy, sticks like Velcro, and pricks like Sleeping Beauty's enchanted needle without the magic narcolepsy.*



## **1) What was the event? What was its goal?**

Water chestnuts are invasive weeds (not the one we see in the supermarkets) that grow prolifically on the Charles River, blocking water channels, choking out native flora and fauna, and degrading water quality. Our job was to pull the weeds out of water, and then transport them to the shore or a barge by a canoe for composting.

## **2) How did you find out about this event?**

I was really looking for a community service event that is both interesting and rewarding, and suitable for a group of graduate students. So the first thing came to my mind was beach cleaning, but then I found out this great opportunity of canoeing and cleaning the river. I didn't remember we had similar events in Ashdown before, so I thought it would be exciting!

## **3) Did you have any problems when you were organizing the event?**

The event was much more popular than I had thought. I posted it two weeks earlier and the signup sheet was filled up within hours, but unfortunately the organizer couldn't provide more spots. However I am glad to know that they will host multiple events in the future.

## **4) What was the most interesting part of it?**

Canoeing. I had very little experience before the event, but at the end of the day we were able to paddle coordinately and move fast.

## **5) What was the most terrible?**

I hate those water chestnuts! They have sharp seeds that can cut your hands even when you are wearing gloves. And the roots are long and all entangled together, so it is difficult to pull them out of water.



*The gunked-up part of the Charles River. Some green is good (lily pads, algae). Most green is bad (water chestnuts).*

## Charles River Water ... Removal Event (cont.)



### 6) How many people went, and what are their names?

Ten: He Wang, Sakul Ratanaalert, Peter Trocha, Sarah Bricault, Akash Phadnis, Abaya Sundaresan, David Wang, Jameel Zayed, Simmy Willemann and Chris Hooper. This is a pretty diverse group – from first-year students to post-docs. And I am glad Sakul was there so he could take pictures. *(Ed. Note: Thanks He for organizing! Photo of most of the group, left. Name order above does not match standing order left.)*

### 7) What was your personal goal as Officer in organizing the event?

Obviously I hoped the event to be fun so people can enjoy, and meet new friends. After all, this is the first event I have organized at Ashdown so I don't want it to be boring. But I also hoped that at the end of the day, people can see what a great job they have done for our city and our river.

### 8) What future events do you have planned?

The next project would be about recycling. Many times I was confused about whether an item is recyclable or not, so I decided to do something about it. I may create a list or a poster of recyclable items so everyone hopefully would not be confused again.



*Above: load the barges. Left: Peter Trocha sifts through plants and captures chestnuts. Right: Peter smiles against a clean river backdrop. All clear here!*



*Photos courtesy of Sakul Ratanaalert.*

## Why did the graduate student read this at 3am?

Because he was taking a break from reviewing journal papers! Okay, that probably wasn't very funny, but hopefully the rest of this page is more entertaining:



**Funny Caption Contest!**  
Submit your hilarious caption to the Editor at [ashdown-newsletter@mit.edu](mailto:ashdown-newsletter@mit.edu)

by **August 31, 2012** and the Top 3 submissions will be posted in the following issue and win a **\$5 gift card to Amazon** (lots of chances to win money in this issue, aren't there?). Readers can vote on their favorite of the Top 3, and the winner will receive an additional **\$10 gift card to Amazon**.

**Q:** Why won't Heisenberg operators live in the suburbs?

**A:** They don't commute!

**Q:** What do you do with a dead chemist?

**A:** Barium

Photo courtesy of Aarthy Adityan

## Kids' Corner (aka Ask the Roman Kids Stuff)

**Dante**

**3. What is your favorite food?**

Pelminis. Because they're my favorite.

**3.5. Least favorite?**

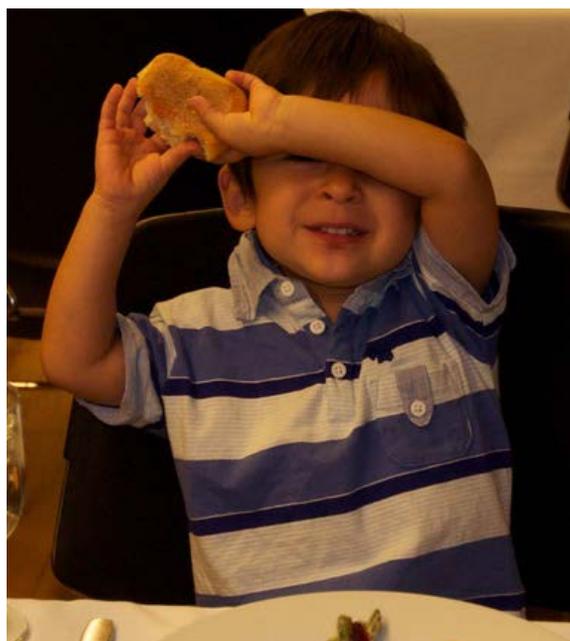
I don't like paper food.

**4. What is your favorite drink?**

Orange juice. Because I like that kind of juice.

**4.5. Least favorite?**

I don't like to drink water. Because I like milk instead, and juice.





**Max**

**3. What is your favorite food?**

My favorite food... ice cream. Ice cream with chocolate chips and cookies.

**3.5. Least favorite?**

I don't like leaves that are kind of like salad.

**4. What is your favorite drink?**

Ummm... ummmm... I like water, milk, and juice. That's all.

**Got questions you want to ask Max and Dante? Forward them to the Editor at [ashdown-newsletter@mit.edu](mailto:ashdown-newsletter@mit.edu) and we'll see what they say!**

## **Citizen's Corner: Submission Guidelines**

Do you have a flair for writing?

Do you have an experience you would love to share? A cause you want to speak out for? An event you would like publicized and reported?

The ears of Ashdown are thirsting to hear your story!

The "Citizen's Corner" is a section of "3am" aimed at reflecting the lives and perspectives of Ashdown residents. All Ashdown residents are invited to contribute, and all kinds of material are welcome. In the past, we have received everything from overseas exchange program stories to essays about environmentalism. We are especially keen on the views of international students comparing the way of life (in terms of culture, atmosphere, education system etc.) here to the ones they were used to.

If your contribution is selected, you will be rewarded with a **\$10 gift card to Amazon**.

Guidelines in a nutshell:

- Submissions should be between 100 and 1500 words.
- No politically sensitive, religiously sensitive, or pornographic material.
- Pictures to accompany text are welcome.
- Email Sakul Ratanalert at [ashdown-newsletter@mit.edu](mailto:ashdown-newsletter@mit.edu).



## Ashdown Reviews: Tell us what you ate!

This column, *Ashdown Reviews*, aims to provide 3AM readers a chance to read what other readers have thought about restaurants and other places around Cambridge and Boston. **You can contribute!** Submit a review of a restaurant or other recommended locale you have been to recently (pictures would be nice, too), and if it is selected you will be rewarded with a **\$10 gift card to Amazon**. Let Ashdown know where they should go when they have (gasp) free time!

## Solution to Puzzle #1 (June 2012 Edition)

(See June Edition for the Puzzle Statement, designed by Sakul Ratanalert).

From the details in the puzzle, there is only one solution to the Tic-Tac-Toe game in which Dawn forces Ash to lose and “none of the Xs in the winning line are neighboring her initial X.” Because she needs to “record the path to victory”, a helpful way to express the solution is as follows, with the numbers denoting the order in which the moves were made:

	O <sub>2</sub>	X <sub>1</sub>
	O <sub>6</sub>	O <sub>4</sub>
X <sub>5</sub>	X <sub>7</sub>	X <sub>3</sub>

So, what to do with this “path to victory”? The list of items wagered happens to have five 3x3 boxes. Using this path to trace out the letters in a box in the given order should hopefully reveal the SECRET CODE WORD. Which box, though? The puzzle mentions “a mail *box full of letters*”, and since we haven’t used that piece of information yet, we should look for the box that has no blanks, the fourth:

1)	D	I	G	I	T	A	L	C	A	M	E	R	A				
2)	C	A	N		O	F	C	R	E	A	M	E	R				
3)	C	A	M	P	I	N	G	T	E	N	T						

Following the letters, the word “MANATEE” appears. SECRET CODE WORD FOUND.

## Contact the Editor

Please direct any comments or queries about “3am” to Sakul Ratanalert at [ashdown-newsletter@mit.edu](mailto:ashdown-newsletter@mit.edu)