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Burnt PPD van still a mystery

PPD vehicle used for recycling caught fire, cause under investigation

By **ALLISON EHRENREICH**
NEWS EDITOR

Flames engulfed a Physical Plant Department (PPD) van on the evening of Saturday, November 14, burning the vehicle to an unusable shell. The cause of the fire is currently under investigation.

During Security's rounds that evening, an officer saw a bright light emitting from the Athletic Center's parking lot; the light's source was the fire.

The officer on duty called the Waterville Fire Department to put out the fire. The van was unsalvageable; it had already been on fire some time before it was noticed. Surrounding vehicles and lampposts were unscathed.

The Waterville Fire Department did not uncover the source of the fire, and has passed the case on to the State Fire Marshall, who is still investigating the fire.

"We don't really know what happened," Director of the Physical Plant Pat Murphy said.

"I'd like to think it wasn't arson, and there's really nothing to lead us to believe that it was arson at this time," Pete Chenevert, di-

rector of Security, said.

The most plausible theory, both Chenevert and Murphy said, is that the fire was electrical. That Saturday saw heavy rains, and the fire appears to have started near the front of the van, by the engine, according to Chenevert.

According to Don Zavadil, assistant director of grounds and custodial services, the vehicle—a 2001 Chevrolet Astro—was used that very morning for routine recycling and trash collection. It "was parked around 10 am," he said, and it sat for the rest of the day until it caught fire.

Insurance covered the loss, and "we'll be replacing the vehicle, hopefully in the next week or so," Murphy said. In the meantime, PPD has been sharing another vehicle for recycling purposes.

The burnt van is currently in what is called the "boneyard," an eerie graveyard of sorts for discarded furniture and vehicles, located in the woods behind the Athletic Center parking lot.

Assistant News Editor Michael Brophy contributed reporting to this article.

BLUE LIGHTS MANIA



James O'Brien '12 and Toreyan Clarke '11 solo in the Blue Lights a cappella concert Tuesday, December 8 to a full crowd in the chapel.

Admissions works through recession

By **KELSEY CONROY**
NEWS STAFF

Despite rough economic times, the College has not seen a significant downturn in application numbers.

The total effects of the downturn are still unknown, however, because as the deadline for regular decision applications is not until January 1. Using data from early decision applicants and regular decision applications that have already submitted, the number of applicants this year compared to last year "indicates that we should come in at or around last year's total," Director of Admissions Steve Thomas said.

The College has received about 10 percent fewer applications than it had at this point last year. Similar declines in applications have also occurred at many of Colby's peer schools, including Amherst, Williams and Bates. It still remains unknown whether this is directly a result of the economy or rather that there are simply fewer high school seniors than in recent years in the United States.

While the economic recession

has not considerably altered the number of applicants thus far, there has been a slight shift in the demographic of applicants. Thomas notes the change is an increase by "a percentage point or two of applicants who live closer to Colby and not from farther away." This suggests that students are placing a heavier weight on travel cost than the expense of college itself when applying. By the application deadline, the College will be able to discern whether this proves true.

In light of the recession, applicants' decisions to apply and to enroll at the College may be partially based on financial aid. "Colby's no-loan policy receives much thoughtful praise and makes a difference, I think, in many applicants' decisions," Thomas said. The continuation of the grants policy helps reinforce the positive perception of the College for parents concerned about how the downturn of the economy has affected Colby. It also lifts the burden of worry about piling up student loans off of applicants' shoulders.

Thomas also points out that

"the dollar's plunge in overseas currency values makes us a less expensive alternative to many international students. Colby's measurable niche in the international student market helps us in this regard." If this prediction proves accurate, the College may reach its goal of embracing

diversity more so than it currently does.

The economic recession should not impact the admissions decisions themselves, and as far as one can tell, the College's applicant pool will not be adversely affected by the current economic situation, according to Thomas.



The 2001 Chevy Astro, pictured above after the fire, was burnt to a crisp on the evening of Saturday, November 14 around 7 p.m. Its remains sit in the "boneyard," located behind the Athletic Center. The cause of the fire is still unknown.



Applicants' eyes turn to Lunder House, the admissions office, each application season.

ECHO EXCLUSIVE: Q&A

SGA officials wrap up semester

By **MICHAEL BROPHY**
ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

Assistant News Editor Michael Brophy sat down with the entire Student Government Association (SGA) Executive Board to discuss the organization's accomplishments and failures this past semester, as well as its goals for the rest of the year after SGA's final meeting of the semester on Sunday, December 6.

DURING SGA'S OCTOBER 4 MEETING, YOU DISCUSSED THE POSSIBILITY OF TAKING ACTION TO MAKE SECURITY'S NEW ROLE MORE TRANSPARENT. THAT HASN'T HAPPENED, AND MANY STUDENTS STILL HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT SECURITY'S NEW ROLE ON CAMPUS. WHY DIDN'T YOU FOLLOW UP ON THIS IDEA?

SGA President Jake Fischer: That's one of the things that's just sort of slipped through the cracks; it just didn't happen. As far as the

actual rules [that govern Security] go, there is no "allowed" or "not allowed." As for protocol, nothing has changed. They've just decided not to go into dorms until last rounds.

SGA Vice President Katie Unsworth: This is an issue where we didn't know where it was going to go because of the new implementation system; it's a new approach. We are going to [Community Advisors] CAs and other student leader groups to figure out what's going on, what the problems are and confront it as student body and student leaders as opposed to mandated policy from Security.

ONE OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S MAIN GOALS IS TO CHANGE THE CULTURE OF JANPLAN AND GIVE STUDENTS MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTELLECTUAL ACTIVITY IN AND OUTSIDE OF THEIR CLASSES. WHAT SORT OF ROLE DO YOU SEE SGA PLAYING IN THIS PROCESS?

Unsworth: Because of our budget surplus [of \$11,000 this semester], SGA will be operating in JanPlan for the first time ever this

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Katie Unsworth
SGA Vice President

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ever as well. We are looking to do our part to make sure there will be more student events going on and we expect to see some really positive change.

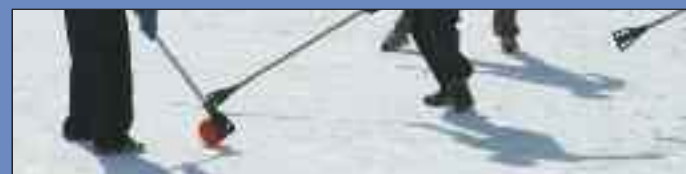
Publicity Chair Ricky Schwartz: One thing that I've noticed that the administration has done is that a lot of classes are starting earlier. For example, I'm taking a class that starts at 10 a.m., when in the past I don't think I've ever taken a JanPlan class that started before 1 p.m. I think that in itself will play a big part in helping kids take their time on campus in January more seriously.

LOOKING BACK, WHAT ARE YOU, AS AN EXECUTIVE BOARD, MOST PROUD OF HAVING ACCOMPLISHED SO FAR THIS YEAR?

Unsworth: I think everybody in SGA is really happy with the HFAC [Housing Facilities Advi-

THIS WEEK'S ECHO

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Broomball is almost here, Page 8

News.....1-3 Editorial.....6
Local News.....4-5 Forum.....10-11
Opinion.....6-7 A&E.....12-13
Features.....8-9 Sports.....14-16



Super Mash Bros., Page 12



Basketball undefeated, Page 16

See SGA, Page 2