

College applications up at Murdock

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WINCHENDON — More than 80-percent of Murdock High School's prospective graduating class of 2017 applied to college before Dec. 1 and that's a number guidance counselors Rachel Weinhold and Mary Ann Borsky can't recall having been previously matched.

Last month, on the Monday and Tuesday before Thanksgiving vacation, Murdock joined other schools

in a nationwide drive to encourage early applications and "the results speak for themselves," said an encouraged Weinhold.

"Some of them had already sent applications in but we were happy to see others taking advantage and doing it" that week, she added.

Plenty of students opted to apply to Mount Wachusett Community College.

"That's a good place for a lot of them to start. Not everyone knows what they want to major

in right away and if they're looking past undergraduate degrees to graduate school, the Mount can save them a lot of money," Weinhold said.

"You realistically need a graduate degree in a lot of fields now," added Borsky, noting, "it used to be you could do well with just an undergraduate degree but that's not always the case anymore, so we understand why starting at the Mount makes financial

Turn To **COLLEGE** page **A12**



COLLEGE

continued from page A1

sense.”

That said, numerous students have applied to elite universities including Ivy League institutions including Harvard, Yale, and Dartmouth as well as Tufts and other top-notch schools.

“We didn’t start the process that week,” Weinhold added.

“We met with seniors in English classes because that’s the course they all have to take so we know where to find them,” she laughed, adding, “then we’d meet with each of them individually and talk about their post-graduation plans. It wasn’t easy, either. Some of them are so busy with other things — sports, drama, work, it was hard to find everyone and get together with them.”

Borsky acknowledged not every student in the 65-member senior class has college plans.

“Some are going into the military and several are looking at trade careers and you always need electricians and plumbers and we have a couple kids looking at Monty Tech’s evening program but we always stress looking at every option,” she said.

Students Jay Pereria and junior Thomas Sutherland are already taking college courses as part of Murdock’s dual-enrollment program with the Mount. That collaboration has provided several MHS students with a head start on college and last year Lindsey Paul actually received her AA degree from MWCC two weeks before getting her high school diploma.

“It’s really benefits the students who are a part of it,” reflected Borsky.

Murdock’s college connection to the Mount doesn’t stop there. It includes participating in the TRIO program. Established more than a half-century ago, TRIO includes Upward Bound, Talent Search and Student Support Services, all of which are designed to help enable students to maximize their academic potential. The November event was part as well of GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs), the latter funded through state grants aimed at helping students from targeted schools prepare for college.

Organizers did it up big too, with raffles and other prizes.

“The kids felt good about it and having 83-percent having already applied is a very good number,” said Weinhold. “We’d like to do this again next year.”