



April 2007

Good Neighbors? Relationship between Colby and the community marked by tensions, community service, mutual economic interests

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Recommended Citation

Wilson, David McKay (2007) "Good Neighbors? Relationship between Colby and the community marked by tensions, community service, mutual economic interests," *Colby Magazine*: Vol. 96 : Iss. 1 , Article 6. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/colbymagazine/vol96/iss1/6>

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5 Colby students face alcohol charges

By AMY CALDER
Staff Writer

WATERVILLE — Five more Colby College students were announced over the weekend and charged with possession of alcohol by a minor — this, after nine Colby students were charged Friday with similar offenses.

The increase in alcohol-related incidents have prompted police to crack down on designated drivers by making it a charge, thus with furnishing a place for them to consume, according to both police Chief John E. Morris and Deputy Chief Joseph J. Hennes.

sufficient injury or death by students who are binge drinking. It appears that all of the police and Colby efforts in the area of education are failing.

Colby spokesman Stephen J. Colling said Monday that the college administration charges Morris and Hennes's concerns and also is working to prevent a tragedy.

"Colby is committed to teaching students about the dangers of alcohol misuse and has ongoing programs of education and information," Colling said. "Colby does not tolerate consumption of alcohol by people who are under 21 and we have policies in place to discourage it."

"The number of alcohol-related cases associated with Colby students has been on the rise. My fear is that we're heading toward a significant injury or death by students who are binge drinking. It appears that all of the police and Colby efforts in the area of education are failing."

Waterville Police Chief John E. Morris

According to police, the five students charged Friday were charged with possession of alcohol by a minor, a charge that carries a maximum penalty of one year in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

Colby student who was under 21, was not charged as he had not been drinking, said Morris.

Colby students donate \$22,500 for new cancer center

By DAVID BICKLEY
Staff Writer

Colby College students have donated \$22,500 to the new cancer center at the University of Maine.

The raise was for the new cancer center, which was the first of its kind in the state. It was scheduled to open in 2007, and the college students donated the money to help with the construction.

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He was highly intoxicated, Morris said. He was charged with alcohol possession and was taken to the hospital.

On Friday, nine Colby students were charged with possession of alcohol by a minor.

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College's three '06-'07 Senior Scholars' projects near completion

By DAVID BICKLEY
Staff Writer

Colby College students have completed their senior projects for the '06-'07 Senior Scholars' program.

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GOOD NEIGHBORS?

Relationship between Colby and the community marked by tensions, community service, mutual economic interests

On a crisp November morning, 30 Colby seniors in sweatshirts and blue jeans gathered to plant hundreds of daffodil bulbs in a garden bed they'd cleared at Castonguay Square. The flowers would blossom in front of Waterville City Hall a few weeks before the seniors graduate and would be their gift to a city some will leave with very mixed emotions.

Many will bid farewell with fond memories of the place they've called home for the past four years. They'll remember the hours spent tutoring Waterville students in area schools or carrying out water testing at Maine lakes threatened by residential sprawl. They'll remember the nights dancing downstairs at the Midnight Blues Club or just hanging out on Main Street, lingering over a tall latte at Jorgensen's.

Others will leave with a tinge of resentment. The aggressive enforcement of Maine's liquor laws by local police, funded in part with federal anticrime funds, has left scores of students with an unexpected first-hand lesson about the criminal justice system. In fact, a few bulb-planting student volunteers that morning were logging community service hours related to alcohol-related incidents.

“Things can be tense between Colby and Waterville, and the negative feelings can sometimes override the positive feelings,” said Senior Class Representative Annie Mears ’07, who headed the daffodil project. “It’s nice to get the positive energy to the surface.”

The strains between Colby students and the local police are just one element of the complex relationship between the College and its community that has evolved since Colby moved its campus to Mayflower Hill in the 1940s and ’50s. By leaving downtown, Colby set the stage for its remarkable expansion across 700 acres of pastures and woodlands. It did so without the nasty fights over land use that typify town-gown clashes at city campuses across the country.

While the move gave Colby room to grow, it created a geographical distance from Waterville that became psychological as well. The spires that rose over Lorimer Chapel and Miller Library were indeed ivory-colored towers, which could be seen looming above the working-class community by the Kennebec. The decline of the region’s industrial sector in the late 20th century further highlighted the divide. As Colby and its predominantly upper-middle class student body prospered up the hill, Waterville’s industrial base crumbled in the valley. The city’s homeowners, meanwhile, were burdened with property taxes that are among the nation’s highest, in a regional hub where 28 percent of its property is owned by tax-exempt institutions.

Colby has long worked to bridge that divide. That effort in recent years has included programs that bring residents up to campus and send Colby students, faculty, and administrators down from Mayflower Hill. Waterville children visit on Halloween for a daylong Haunted House at a Colby dorm, and qualified Waterville High seniors take classes at the College. Colby’s Goldfarb Center holds statewide



Caroline Woolmington ’09, a student mentor with Colby Cares About Kids, works with a young friend at the Albert S. Hall School in Waterville. More than 300 students take part in the program, which serves students at schools in and around Waterville.

candidate debates, civic engagement courses use the community as their classroom, and the Colby Cares About Kids mentoring program brings hundreds of undergraduates into local schools.

Colby has also helped revive Waterville’s struggling economy, working with local leaders and investing endowment funds to jump-start the city’s transformation to its postindustrial future.

Former Dean of the College Earl Smith, whose 2006 history of the College, *Mayflower Hill*, chronicles Colby’s development since its founding in 1813, says the town-gown relationship has improved.

“Leaving aside the issue of the kids and the cops, the relationship is a lot warmer because of Colby’s involvement,” said Smith, who grew up in Waterville and spent 40 years working at Colby. “The locals have to come to realize—if it weren’t for Colby, where would we be?”

At Waterville City Hall, City Manager Mike Roy ’74, who grew up in Waterville and made his name playing hockey at Colby’s Alfond Arena in high school and in college, pulls out a report with the

startling statistics that show Waterville’s decline over his lifetime. The population hovered around 18,000 in the early 1950s. By 1970, when Roy was a Colby freshman, it had risen to 19,000. The Scott Paper Co. mill, across the Kennebec in Winslow, ran three shifts, and the Hathaway Shirt Co. factory cranked out button-down Oxfords by the thousands. Today, both plants are shut down and the population has shrunk to 15,600. Sixty percent of the city’s elementary school children now come from low-income families.

Over those years, Waterville’s downtown has mirrored the population decline, with landmark department stores like Sterns and Levine’s shuttered and retail shoppers fleeing to big box stores by I-95. Downtown, meanwhile, restaurants, bars, and the city’s cultural institutions have survived, buoyed in part by Colby students, visitors, and the College’s leadership under President William “Bro” Adams. He chairs the board of the Waterville Regional Arts and Community Center, located in the old Sterns Department Store, and has become a force in the economic development community.

PHOTO BY FRED FIELD



Colby backed FirstPark, the 285-acre business and technology center in Oakland, investing \$500,000 in a still-vacant office building that went up in 2005. The business park is a regional initiative in which 24 central Maine municipalities committed development funds and share in revenues from tenants like T-Mobile USA, which employs about 700 at its customer service center.

Adams was an initial member of a revitalized Waterville Development Corp., which is helping the city market a downtown 12-acre parcel on the Kennebec. Through its financial support for the operating costs of the WDC, Colby has indirectly assisted the project conceived by real estate developer Paul Boghossian '76, who wants to transform the vacant Hathaway factory buildings into a mixed-use complex with offices, artist lofts, student housing, and artisan shops.

"We are trying to play an active but reasonable role in economic development," Adams said. "We are players. We see it both as being in our interest and our obligation."

Despite Colby's involvement in the local development scene, its tax-exempt status rankles some residents, including psychologist Richard Staples, who moved to Waterville in 1978 and can see the college spires from his Johnson Heights home. Staples, whose office is located in the original Foss Hall on College Avenue, pays \$5,000 in property taxes on a home that's valued at \$200,000.

"Waterville has become an expensive place to live," said Staples. "I don't see it as a major concern for Colby. It makes me wonder if I'm going to stay here or move to Oakland or Winslow, where taxes are lower."

Maine's colleges are of two minds on property taxes. Bowdoin and the University of Maine make payments in lieu of taxes to their host communities. In 2007 Bowdoin will give Brunswick an annual \$100,000 unrestricted gift while the University of

Maine will give \$625,000 to the town of Orono. Such payments provide general funding that the municipalities can use as they please.

Colby and Bates, meanwhile, make their community investments on a more deliberative basis, finding projects they deem worthy of support. In 2002 Colby decided to split the cost of a rescue truck, to pitch in for the protection it receives from the Waterville Fire Department. The last of five \$20,000 payments will be made this year.

"I feel that both communities have a lot to offer each other. ... I've definitely taken advantage of that opportunity. I love Waterville."

Keegan Albaugh '07J

Colby also directs \$60,000 year—in \$15,000 grants—to the Waterville Opera House, Waterville Main Street Inc., the Maine Independent Film Festival, and the Central Maine Growth Council.

"When we see these opportunities, we invest in them," said President Adams.

Waterville City Councilman Steven Aucoin for years has railed against the city's myriad tax-exempt institutions, which include its hospitals, churches, and colleges. But he has yet to find much support for his call for payments in lieu of taxes.

"I bridle at the unfairness," Aucoin said. "I have people on fixed-income paying those people's way. It confounds me that I can't get a dialogue here on this issue."

Colby, meanwhile, stresses its involvement beyond the property-tax issue. Its \$120-million annual budget supports about 700 full- and part-time jobs, making it Waterville's second-largest employer. Its 1,800 students come to town with money to spend, as do their parents who frequent places like the Holiday Inn, where housekeeper Margery Grenier has worked since 1995. "The Colby people are polite and they are big tippers," said Grenier, of Winslow. "It works well for us."

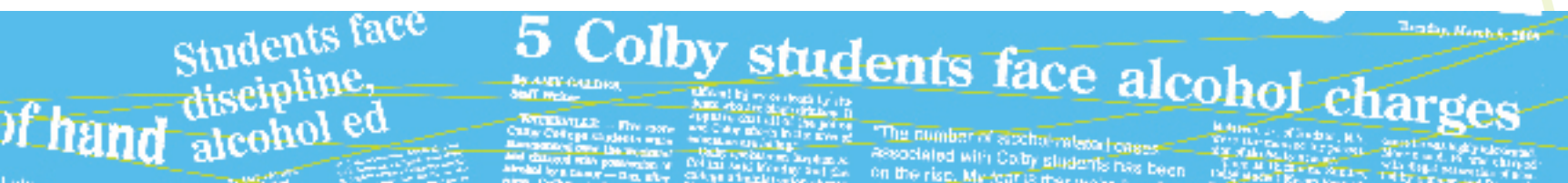
Colby's students also bring their talents to town, both through volunteerism, and through work in civic engagement courses, which extend classroom boundaries into the greater Waterville community. About 300 Colby students volunteer through Colby Cares About Kids, mentoring youngsters in the Waterville schools, with students like Zach Ezor '10 going twice weekly to Albert S. Hall School on Pleasant Street.

For Ezor, volunteering is an opportunity to connect with fourth-grader Colby Robertson, a towheaded 10 year old. The student volunteer group also provided a community for Ezor when he arrived on campus. "It was a way to meet like-minded people," he said. "It's nice to be around people who volunteer."

Keegan Albaugh '07J first met Waterville youths at the South End Teen Center in a civic engagement class called Children and Adolescents in Schools and Society, in which Colby students were required to work with local adolescents to both learn about the real lives of children and to get involved in the community.

Albaugh felt so connected there that he stayed on at the Teen Center and for two years (until leaving Waterville in December) served as its paid teen coordinator weekday afternoons, organizing activities that range from homework help to cooking.

He also interviewed Colby students and Waterville residents for a sociology research paper, finding that those who had



“ If we get there and there is alcohol and they are under twenty-one, we can't ignore it. ... It's our responsibility to uphold the law. ”

John Morris
Waterville Police Chief

interactions with each other ended up with positive impressions.

“I feel that both communities have a lot to offer each other,” Albaugh said, over lunch at Foss dining hall with friends. “I’ve definitely taken advantage of that opportunity. I love Waterville.”

But that sentiment was not shared by all sitting around the table at Foss. Several students lamented the crackdown on underage drinking by police in Waterville and the surrounding communities.

Waterville Police Chief John Morris says his get-tough measures are necessary to ensure peace in Waterville’s neighborhoods and to enforce the state’s ban on drinking by minors. Morris means business. Under Colby regulations, campus security officers bring intoxicated students to the College’s health center, where, if blood alcohol tests reveal severe intoxication, they are sent by ambulance to the local emergency room. Waterville police respond to such ambulance calls, and they later issue citations to underage students if hospital blood tests show they’ve been drinking. Sometimes the citations have been issued in the emergency room.

“If we get there and there is alcohol and they are under twenty-one, we can’t ignore it,” Morris said. “It’s our responsibility to

uphold the law.”

While the Colby administration has generally good relations with the local police, Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students Jim Terhune says their involvement in such cases doesn’t sit right with him.

“I personally don’t like the feel of police hanging around a situation that’s medical in nature,” he said. “If a student happens to be in a situation when they are underage and are intoxicated, that’s the breaks. But I don’t like the sense that maybe the police are looking for excuses to give Colby students tickets.”

This September was particularly troublesome for Colby students.

Winslow police busted an off-campus party several miles out in the countryside after tailing a taxicab with underage Colby students. Twenty-eight students were cited, with their arrests big news in the *Waterville Sentinel*. A \$5,000 federal grant to combat underage drinking paid for the police overtime as the Winslow police worked until 4 a.m. processing the arrests.

Among those attending the party was Tammy Lewin ’07, who was 21 at the time. Nevertheless, she was detained for two hours that morning while police used Breathalyzers to determine if the minors had been drinking. If so, in Maine that’s enough to charge underage drinkers with unlawful possession of alcohol. “Students feel like they are targeted by the police,” Lewin said.

In early September, before classes began, police raided an off-campus house on Sheldon Place in downtown Waterville where some underage students had been drinking. The three Colby students who rented the house were handcuffed and taken by cruiser to police headquarters to be charged with furnishing a place for minors to drink.

To avoid a night in jail, they agreed to strict bail conditions. The students, who were 21 at the time, promised to abstain

from drinking and to not possess alcohol. They also gave up their right to privacy, agreeing to let the police search their house at any time to make sure they were complying with these conditions, with a violation bringing certain jail time.

During the five-week period before their case came to trial, the police twice visited the house at 10 p.m. to search for alcohol, the students said. They found none.

“It might sound a little draconian, and I recognize that, but it has brought peace to the community,” says Morris.

Attorney Michaela Murphy ’78, who defended the Sheldon Place students, went to Superior Court in Augusta for a review of the bail conditions after the house was searched a second time. That resulted in a plea deal in which the students received a deferred disposition, which means the charges will be dismissed if they carry out 200 hours of community service—that’s five 40-hour weeks—and don’t commit another crime.

“We said enough was enough,” said Murphy, whose son attends Colby and husband works there. “But students also have to understand the consequences if they break the law.”

Such policies have put a new twist on the college experience, as was evidenced one autumn night as a slew of Colby students swathed in togas gathered at a house on the outskirts of Waterville while the Leonid meteor showers streaked through the quiet night sky.

This was a Colby party, circa 2006. The students drank Sunday River microbrew from a keg. They played a drinking game called Beirut with pingpong balls lobbed into cups of beer. They bent down under the “Ice Luge” to guzzle vodka poured down a channel cut in a block of ice. In an allusion to 1978 hit movie *Animal House*, the students chanted “Toga! Toga!” and danced to “Shout.”

It may sound like the kind of party Colby alumni experienced back in the day

Colby students
donate \$22,500 for
new cancer center

Colby quiet about senior celebration penalties

By JOEL ELLIOTT
Staff Writer

arrested students will face academic penalties or other disciplinary action. Colby president

has been going on for a few years now, and the college has worked hard to manage it as

figures handled the situation. “I’m pretty outraged about whole thing,”

at houses on Fraternity Row or at off-campus houses in downtown Waterville.

But it's different today. The party's host, who had volunteers checking ID's at the door, held the affair knowing that he risked arrest if police raided the soirée and found underage drinkers. His guests were prepared to be Breathalyzed by the police—not for driving while intoxicated but for having consumed a beer.

But the party that night never got too loud, neighbors didn't complain and the police never showed up, with the taxicabs and designated drivers ferrying everyone home safely early that morning.

Dean of Students Terhune, who came to Waterville in 2006 after spending 15 years at Colgate University in upstate New York, says the alcohol issue remains a troublesome topic at campuses across the country and can color town-gown relations.

He said following the September booze busts, relations have improved, with students moderating their behavior in response to the crackdown.

"The bottom line is that this is how we have made headway with the students," Terhune said. "They know this is what the police are going to do, and they have to change their behavior to avoid getting in trouble."

Students have done just that this year, with no repetition of the September incidents as of April. And as *Colby* was going to press, students, staff, and faculty were readying events that were intended, in part, to bring the College and the community closer.

Students oversaw a reconfigured version of "Champagne on the Steps," an end-of-classes tradition that was marred by arrests for disorderly conduct last year, but this year was relatively trouble free.

A student production of *Wonder of the World*, a tragicomedy, was staged at The Studio Theater in The Center on Main Street. Students in Assistant Professor Tilar Mazzeo's English 413 course, with the help of the Goldfarb Center, created a living history event, culminating in a Jane Austen gala at the Waterville Public Library.

The Colby South End Coalition was recruiting student entertainers for its annual ice-cream social at The Center. And the annual Colby Cares Day, on April 21, brought hundreds of student volunteers into Waterville to rake leaves, ready city playgrounds for spring—and prepare some of those same garden beds students planted with bulbs in the fall. And the incoming Student Government Association president and vice-president, Nicholas Cade '08 and Jeffrey Mullins '08, were meeting with Waterville Main Street, a downtown civic group, on plans for a day-long Waterville-Colby festival to be held at Head of Falls in September.

"We are citizens of this city, ..." said Mears, the senior class representative. "We want to do our part. It's all about giving to others."

ROB KIEWIT '08



HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The last time someone published a bound history of Waterville was in 1902. A lot has happened since then, and Stephen Plocher '07 was determined to get it down on paper—and the Web.

Plocher, an English major concentrating in creative writing, turned his skills from fiction to reality in January. As a member of the Colby South End Coalition, an organization that works with Waterville teenagers, Plocher knew more about Waterville than most Colby students. With the encouragement of Tom Longstaff, Crawford Family Professor of Religious Studies, emeritus, and a member of the Waterville City Council, Plocher got Elizabeth Leonard, the John J. and Cornelia V. Gibson Professor of History, to sponsor a Jan Plan so he could roll up his sleeves and set out to learn the whole story.

Researching at Special Collections in Miller Library and at the Waterville Public Library, Plocher found honors theses on aspects of the city's history, including its labor market and rich Franco-American contributions. He read the 1902 history, by Edwin Carey Whittemore, and Earl Smith's history of Colby, *Mayflower Hill*. And he perused the special section published by the *Morning Sentinel* on the occasion of the city's bicentennial in 2002.

What emerged from the work of the Corvallis, Oregon, resident, is titled "A Short History of Waterville, Maine." It begins in prehistoric times, recounting the first industrialization of the city with the construction of Lockwood Mills in the 1860s, incorporation of the city in 1888, the modernization of the city, from World War I to the 1950s, and the federal urban renewal programs and mill closings that shaped the city of today.

Looking to the future, Plocher cites the redevelopment of the Hathaway Shirt Co. factory (spearheaded by Paul Boghossian '76), regional cooperation, and industrial and recreational development efforts that are ongoing.

City officials were pleased with Plocher's contribution. "I was very impressed with the research effort and with his writing style," said City Manager Mike Roy '74. "We don't see making any changes at all."

A downloadable version of the 24-page history, which includes current and historical photos, is on the city's Web site (www.ci.waterville.me.us/).

Plocher, who was planning to move to Baltimore after graduation, wants his work to be a resource for years to come. In the short term, it has changed the way he sees the city. "The names on all the streets have a lot more meaning now," he said.

—Gerry Boyle '78

