

Around the World with the Beacon



Herbie Bonk was recently spotted in Monte Carlo at the Monaco Kart Cup with the Andover Beacon in his back pocket. Herbie says, "I never leave home without it."



Chris and Kit Norris pose with the Beacon in front of what became their favorite pub in Edinburgh, Scotland. "We staggered into here the first morning after a red-eye flight from Newark and went back several times for sustenance and what felt like a 'real' Scottish experience," says Chris.



Sara Swenson, granddaughter of Dennis and Margie Fenton, is on an extended stay in Canberra, Australia. In this photo she's visiting Sydney, with the Sydney Opera House in the background.

Letters

In the four years since 2005, our property taxes have increased 36%! The bulk of that increase is due to school expenses, for which the tax rate increased 50%. A secondary cause was Town expenses, for which the tax rate increased 59%!

I'm sure it has been explained before, but during this recession particularly, it would be helpful to get a definitive and quantitative reminder of why we had to make these large investments and what we got in return.

I have read of good work being done to define the reasons people like living in Andover and how growth and development can be guided in the future to maintain and enhance the desired qualities of life here. It seems to me that these questions become moot if some alternative cannot be found to rapidly rising property taxes.

As a retiree on fixed income it is discouraging to contemplate the future if property taxes continue on the same trajectory. I am pretty sure it's no better for other retirees, and I doubt if many of the working residents of Andover saw their income increase at anything near the rate of their property taxes.

Is there no solution?

Respectfully,

Ron Charles

After reading in the October edition of *The Andover Beacon* about the results of Andover middle school students on the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) standardized testing, those of us who teach in the Science Department at Proctor Academy feel compelled to comment.

While we cannot speak to specific issues from the NECAP science test, we can speak to the calibre of science students who have come to Proctor from Andover Elementary/Middle School. More to the point, incoming ninth graders from AE/MS have been among Proctor's strongest science students, often significantly so. They have an excellent foundation in the scientific process, remember what they have previously learned, and just as important – they are truly excited about science. They are fantastic students to have in the classroom! The middle school's science teacher, Ryan Murphy, has transferred a passion for science to his seventh and eighth grade students, and for that, we are grateful.

Given what we see in our classrooms at Proctor, we are mystified by the result of "17% proficiency in science among 8th graders" quoted in the October *Beacon* article. As our AE/MS graduates are so strong in science, it really makes us wonder what kind of science abilities the NECAPs are actually measuring.

It is our opinion that standardized tests tend to measure "mile wide, inch deep" knowledge. Kids can be "taught to the tests" but don't necessarily learn to think critically like scientists. Ryan Murphy is developing real science students who could be on their way to careers in science.

While we understand there may be politics and funding questions behind students' performance on these tests, we want to be clear that the students coming out of Andover – especially over the past five years – are among the best science students we have ever encountered. Proctor teaches students from all over the US, many from very high-powered schools, and Andover's students consistently outperform most of them in our science classes. This is an accomplishment that should be recognized and honored.

We understand from the October *Beacon* article that AE/MS is considering some changes to its science curriculum and instructional methods. We hope that whatever changes being considered do not result in students simply being more proficient at filling in standardized test forms than being the scientifically literate and excited students that they are right now.

Respectfully,

Susan Houston, Phil Hackmann, Heide Johnson, Eric Viandier, Ian Hamlet, Bug Morison, Sarah McIntyre, Josh Norris, Alan McIntyre, Megan Hardie, Chris Young, Kayden Will

The Science Dept. at Proctor Academy

The mission of *The Andover Beacon* is to serve and strengthen the Andover community. To that end, we welcome civil, reasoned letters addressing specifically local issues, events, and developments. Submissions must not be critical of another's religion; blasphemous; obscene; hateful; legally objectionable; or commercial in nature. The *Beacon* reserves the right to edit or not publish submissions it deems inappropriate for any reason.

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