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and so spring begins

Niamh

Spring couldn’t come at a more welcome time. I’m tired of peering through my curtains and seeing nothing but a vast array of snow, snow, and more snow. I’ve wondered when this endless winter will finally let us fall from its cold grasp. Spring Break has provided us all with a necessary breather from the second semester blues. It also marks the beginning of the end. Just a few more weeks of papers, projects and exams. We will be stretched to our limits. Sure, final exams are up ahead, looming shadows at the end of the tunnel, but we’re all in the middle of a test right now. Yes, right now. To some, it’s a test of strength, others a test of endurance. Perhaps a test of will? We’re all in danger of breaking; every single one of us is in danger of falling apart. The human being is a fragile thing, delicate in every way. Physically, mentally, and emotionally. We can be cracked, and we can be thrown into an abyss of self-doubt and hopelessness, never to return. We do that to ourselves. It’s such a shame. I encourage you to look towards the sky and breathe in the air around you. That’s spring! The warmth is sweeping in, and the sky is bluer than it’s ever been. Do you smell the scent of flowers blooming, bursting forth without restraint, free to grow and sway gently in the breeze? Imagine yourself as those flowers. Liberated. Rejuvenated. Let the negativity flow through you. Let it pass. Let it disappear with icy winter. Give yourself some time to piece your own morale back together again. Meditate, if it helps you to focus. Be that fragile thing that becomes unbreakable. We are all stronger than we think we are. This is the time to call on that reserve of strength, emerge from the winter, and move forward. Now is the time when each one of us can be a source of progress. At the end of this these last few weeks is the respite and warmth of summer. Enjoy it.
You do not have to be a color expert to see that green is increasingly the hue of choice in new product designs, advertisements, and other forms of business communications. More than a simple shift in aesthetic preference, this wave of green reflects the increasing awareness of both consumers and corporations about environmental issues like climate change and the degradation of natural ecosystems. Companies of all shapes and sizes are recognizing their environmental responsibilities and attempting to minimize their destructive impacts. While many companies have taken positive steps on their own accord, consumer demand for more environmentally friendly products and sustainable systems of operation are a powerful tool for inciting change.

As consumers of many products and services, we can have a positive impact by spending wisely and making sure that our hard-earned dollars are going to companies that are trying to become more environmentally responsible. There is always the tendency to buy what is familiar or convenient, but what if we look closer? A few simple actions can help us determine which companies are making a concerted effort to protect our planet, which ones are not, and which ones are guilty of “green-washing” or making environmentally friendly claims without any supporting evidence.

One quick way to identify quality purchases is to look for eco-labels. While not all labeling programs are equal, these marks certify that a given product achieves some level of environmental responsibility. Two of the most trusted certification programs include the Forest Stewardship Council and Green Seal. The Forest Stewardship Council is an international non-profit organization that certifies wood products that have come from responsibly harvested forests. The FSC label is increasingly found on paper publications like company newsletters and annual reports. The independent, non-profit organization Green Seal has over thirty different certification programs created to promote the manufacture, purchase, and use of environmentally friendly products and services. The Green Seal mark can be found on everything from household cleaning products to hotels.

Another way to discover a company’s commitment to the environment is by examining their website and looking for a sustainability or corporate social responsibility (CSR) report. Many businesses today are using these communication tools to inform consumers of their green initiatives and efforts at environmental responsibility. This information can help consumers identify greener companies and their products before even entering a store, minimizing the need to examine products individually.

By seeking out information on the environmental impact of the products we buy, consumers can support more responsible companies and force others to change their destructive ways. Purchasing greener products from more environmentally responsible companies reduces our collective impact on the planet, and helps preserve the earth’s natural systems for future generations.
When the Honors Advisory Group dreamt the idea of Green Festivus, our objective was to convey a message of environmental sustainability. This holiday celebration would feature an organic and local menu, LED lights, recycled decorations, and informational posters compiled by the student group, GreenRoutes. Our tagline was “Reduce, Reuse, Rejoice,” encouraging the Colby-Sawyer community to celebrate the holidays in an Earth-friendly way.

We didn’t realize then how prevalent that message would become as we approached the holiday season. By the eve of Green Festivus, everything was in place. The food was prepared, the Honors Suite decorated, and our tree (donated by Spring Ledge Farm) set up and waiting to be garnished by visitors. After months of planning, our efforts were finally coming to fruition. We looked forward to sharing this gift, made possible by our benefactors, Bill and Jan Wesson, with the rest of the campus.

In our anticipation, we vowed to go through with the party under any circumstances, weather included. When the ice storm hit, it crippled the institution and the surrounding areas. As much as we hoped Green Festivus could still run as planned, safety precautions kept us and any potential party-goers out of the building.

So there we were, with enough apple cider, cookies, breads, and tarts to feed 200 people that would not be able to show up. More than coincidentally, a group of townspeople had gathered in a New London shelter seeking refuge from the storm. There were approximately 200 of them.

We were able to ‘recycle’ our goods to individuals who could appreciate them on a deeper level. At the same time, the entire state experienced a naturally-enforced Lights Out, conserving nearly a week’s worth of energy. It wasn’t the most convenient way to get the message across, but it was certainly effective. If anything, it proved that nature supported this initiative and would help us promote it! (Optimistic thinking…)

Despite this unplanned success, the Honors Advisory Committee still wants to share the experience of Green Festivus with the college campus. We are planning to hold the celebration in future months, as a spring farewell to seniors, or as an autumn welcome to first-year students. Stay tuned for more news on the event as plans unfold. We hope that you will join us, both then and always, in celebrating the environment and our community.

Cheryl Coolidge’s “From Here to Eternity” Honors class is absolutely amazing. I am not a scientific expert or fanatic whatsoever, but Professor Coolidge makes the class extremely enjoyable and “down to earth.”

We started out the course learning about the contents and origin of the universe, reading Steven Weinberg’s *The First Three Minutes*, traveling to the Christa McAuliffe Planetarium, and observing the motion of the stars over the course of three weeks. We also completed group papers and presentations on different religions around the world, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Taoism. Over break, we will research historical inventions, as well as emerging innovations. After break, we will be reading Dave Sobel’s *Longitude*, analyzing the costs and benefits of certain scientific undertakings, and reading another book of choice discussing something that impacts the way we live. While we have numerous tasks to complete, the syllabus is reasonably flexible. Cheryl is willing to extend deadlines and allows for student feedback about projects to better fit the course’s flow. As with all Honors courses, every student is willing and eager to learn about the class material. “From Here to Eternity” reflects this positive, love-of-learning attitude, making the class a lot of fun.

**Kimberly Walleston**  
Class of 2009

**Amy Hebert**  
Class of 2010

**Sam Moore** is a Senior Graphic Design and Business student and a member of the Wesson Honors Program. For his Honors Capstone Project, Sam is examining how concern for the environment is inspiring changes in the field of graphic design and redefining the role that designers play in helping businesses communicate with consumers.
So. About this time of year, the endless winter presses on me, and I think first of poet William Wordsworth’s question: “If winter comes, can spring be far behind?” Answer. Yes, of course. Second, I think, “what if there was no weather,” a question posed to me years ago by a friend stuck in the mire of jungles and surprises in Vietnam in the 1960’s. If there were no weather, what would we complain about?

What would we rejoice in? I’m for change. Sweet unexpected, life-shaping change.

Look up! Of course, Spring will come! And we know from practiced naturalists that spring travels ten miles per day from south to north. I saw it recently in Boston and Boston is only one hundred land miles from here. Prosper in the promise. Get ready and catch it, if you can!

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- Albuquerque Convention & Visitors Bureau