

October 24, 2012

TURTLE TRACKS

A WEEKLY EMAIL NEWSLETTER FOR THE VERMONT COMMONS SCHOOL COMMUNITY

UPCOMING EVENTS

October 24

8th Grade
Potluck 6-8 PM

October 26

First Quarter
Ends

October 30

Halloween Dress
Up Day

November 1

9th Grade
Potluck 6-8 PM

November 2

Grandparents Day
Noon Dismissal

Annual Fund Video Launch –by Mary Hamilton-Homer



The Annual Fund Committee is happy to announce the launch of our Student designed and created **Encounter Week Video**. Kudos to Producer/Director Gabe Mantegna, Composer Ivan Voinov and the various student/faculty stars. Please [click on this link](#) to watch. Enjoy the video!

Watch for your Annual Fund letter in the mail and give generously.
Remember our Goals: \$150,000 and 100% participation!!!

Upcoming Volleyball Events



Please join us in recognizing our Seniors on Senior Day at their last home match, this Thursday against our arch-rivals Lake Region (4-6pm at the Edge).

Also, be sure to mark you calendar now for the Volleyball State Championship, November 3rd at Johnson State College!

Admissions Update

Vermont Commons is hosting an Admissions Open House on Sunday, November 4th at 1:00 p.m. for interested prospective students and their families! Please help us spread the word to interested prospective families and encourage them to join us. For further information, please contact Sarah Soule, Director of Admissions, ssoule@vermontcommons.org, [802-865-8084](tel:802-865-8084), ext. 27

Delicious Crepes for Sale!



Support the 2013 Paris Encounter Week!

Crepes are sold every Tuesday and Thursday at lunch time. Past ingredients include: local apples with honey and Shelburne Cheddar; pesto with heirloom tomatoes and mozzarella; and Nutella with bananas.

Crepes are \$5.00. Crepe cards are available at the front desk. (A prepaid card, good for ten crepes for \$40.00!)

Mercy and bon appetite! -Ben, Heather, and the Paris crew.

Introduction From the Wellness Committee



We want to take this time to introduce ourselves to you! We are the Wellness Committee at VCS and we're excited about working with the VCS Community.

Hi, I'm Kimberly Evans, registered dietitian, mother of Seth (11th grader) and Simon, (8th grader), and I work clinically for FAHC, hold a private practice at Vermont Center for Integrative Therapy and, serve as an adjunct faculty member for VTC and CCV. My appreciation for food as it relates to the human body continues to propel me forward as an educator. kimevans11@comcast.net

Hi, I'm Simona Sharoni, the proud mother of Nadia Niva (7th grader) and the chairperson of the Gender and Women's Studies Department at SUNY Plattsburgh. My contribution to the wellness program lies especially in the area of peer education as it relates to body image, self esteem, and healthy/unhealthy relationships. simona.sharoni@gmail.com

Hi, I'm Carol Blattspieler, proud mother of Eliza Jackson (7th grader) and Lex Jackson (VCS grad 2012), am an Orthopaedic Nurse Practitioner for over 30 years, faculty at UVM in graduate nursing school, motivational speaker/traveling orthopaedic educator, and accomplished Ironman Triathlete. I am passionate about fitness, health/wellness, and integrating wellness into our physical/spiritual/mental well-being. carolblatts@gmail.com

Our goal is to include the entire VCS community in developing a successful and powerful wellness initiative and awareness. The Department of Education has outlined some of the topics/requirements VCS must include in developing this program. We want to make wellness fun, interactive, practical and a part of every person's day to day life. We hope your children are as excited as we are moving ahead with this initiative. We also welcome your input! Feel free to contact (via email) any of the three of us with your questions, concerns, or thoughts. Thank you for sharing your wonderful children with us and for your time.

VCS Students Attend Tedx Conference –by Peter Goff



Last Friday, Nora Hill, Jordan Cannon, and Ross Hiatt joined the math and science department for a GeekFest to see UVM's TEDx conference entitled; "Big Scale, Big Fail". The conference included speakers from universities and corporations who do cutting-edge research into the fields of complex systems. Interesting bits of information include the fact that about half of the world's High Frequency Trading (global stock exchanges) take place faster than 650 milliseconds (6/10th of a second), and therefore can only be executed by machines talking to machines... SkyNet, anyone? Major research is being done to quantify a community's happiness by geotagged tweets. It turns out that the intersection right outside of Central Park is the "happiest" place in NYC!... BigBrother, anyone? We got our geek on!

An Invitation to Join the SS9 Election Unit –by Mark Cline Lucey



The 9th grade Social Studies class has decided to take the three weeks leading up to the November 6 presidential election to dive headlong into the campaigns and the issues. The class of eighteen students has divided into four political parties of four, the Republicans, Democrats, Libertarians and Greens. Two additional students are playing the role of news media staff.

All the research and analysis the four parties are currently doing is leading up to a mock presidential debate, which you are invited to! The debate will take place on Grandparents Day, November 2, in the Commons Room from 10:45

-11:45. The debate will be followed by a mock election in which all debate attendees will vote. Please join us to watch Mitt Romney (Merle Beach), Barack Obama (Eli Hinds), Gary Johnson (Nick Sears) and Jill Stein (Galen Fastie) as they face off to capture your vote! The class will also have the honor of a visit by State Representative Kesha Ram on Wednesday the 31st from 1:25-2:25. Ram will speak to the class about her experience as a politician. Again, please join us!

Chemistry II Students Explore Buckthorn –by Rick Scharf

In chemistry, juniors and seniors have been exploring the chemical landscape that they inhabit. There are over 100,000 synthetic chemicals in existence, many of which are in widespread use despite the fact that they have never been proven safe. Due to their properties, many of these chemicals are persistent in the environment (failing to break down) and travel by multiple pathways (air, water, and through the food chain) ending up far from where they were used. For instance, PCB, a commonly used chemical in electrical transformers has been documented to be present in relatively high concentration in the fat of polar bears as well as in humans far from where the PCB's originated. Many of these chemicals have found their way into our bodies as well.

To deepen our understanding of the factors that lead to a decision about appropriate use of chemicals in our environment, our class took on real issue facing forest managers throughout Vermont and in our own community. We visited Shelburne Farms where Forest Manager Marshall Webb and Assistant Forest Manager Dana Bishop introduced us to buckthorn, a non-native invasive plant which threatens to overtake their forests. Shelburne Farm's forest management plan involves stewarding native plants while routinely harvesting trees for lumber. However, buckthorn will quickly out-compete the maples to prevent future hardwood harvests.



VCS students spent an hour pulling buckthorn by hand and using a weed wrench (see photos) and hearing Dana and Marshall discuss their options to address buckthorn. The alternative to physical means of removal is to use glyphosate (under product names Round-up or Rodeo) as an alternative. Shelburne Farms sees a chemical approach as a

last resort. Students left the experience with the assignment to research the issue and take a position advising Shelburne Farms. Their papers yielded a diversity of thoughtful opinion.

Several students advocated against use of chemicals. Peter Larsen considered the properties of the chemicals, "They both have high soil absorption rates, meaning that they enter the Earth, and make themselves at home. Many local birds LOVE the berries from the buckthorn plant...when they eat the berries with herbicide, the chemicals in the herbicides get in the birds and start bioaccumulating." Miles Lamberson added, "Knowing that Round-up and Rodeo both have half-lives close to 50 days, have no selectivity to what plants they effect, and there is current research showing that they may cause harm to human cells, (especially embryonic and placental) using them should be kept to a minimum."

Spencer Reed ruled out the option of doing nothing and letting the buckthorn take over the forest. "If Shelburne Farms were to follow this course of action, their forests would lose most of the value to the farms, and it would greatly reduce the less concrete value that their land provides to the community simply by being an undeveloped area forested with local trees."

Ellis Govoni, arguing for physical removal stated, "With manual labor, we are sure to cause less damage to our ecosystem, as well as keep the forest clean for future generations of maples in the forest."

Some students thought outside of the box. Ivan Voinov noted a "new-age" approach. "Buckthorn bark is a homeopathic substance that can be used as a laxative, purgative, liver disorder treatment, intestinal worms treatment, acne/psoriasis/eczema treatment, as well as a metabolic stimulant. Buckthorn berries can produce oil which is a completely different healing substance that can treat sunburns to radiation damage."

Marshall joined us at VCS to hear student suggestions. He seemed impressed with what he heard and promised to share our thoughts with the committee that will continue to investigate the issue. Our class goals do not allow for more time at SF but we've enjoyed the opportunity to collaborate with an important community partner and to apply our understanding of the fundamentals of chemistry to a real world situation.



This Week in Photos



VERMONT COMMONS SCHOOL - 75 GREEN MOUNTAIN DRIVE, SOUTH BURLINGTON, VT 05403
P: 802-865-8084 F: 802-865-2429 EMAIL: INFO@VERMONTCOMMONS.ORG

WWW.VERMONTCOMMONS.ORG