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## Press Release

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### 9th Graders at Vermont Commons School Circumnavigate Lake Champlain – On Their Bikes!



All seventeen ninth graders at Vermont Commons School had a unique week of school last week: they arrived at school at 8:30am Monday morning, jumped on their bikes at 9:00am and started pedaling north. Five days, 4 nights and 230 miles later, the group returned to VCS just in time for lunch, having successfully completed a bike tour around Lake Champlain.

“It was an amazing experience,” exclaimed Mia Jager, a petite ninth grader whose bike was adorned with streamers on the handlebars. “After I did that gigantic hill (in the Adirondacks), I knew I could do anything!” Other comments about the week included the words: exciting, exhausting, wet, daunting, awesome and fun.

The tour crossed Lake Champlain near the Canadian border at Rouse’s Point and at Crown Point and included overnight camping in Grand Isle, Plattsburgh, Barber Homestead Park, and Button Bay. The group started and finished their tour from the VCS parking lot in South Burlington, an intentional and symbolic component of the trip according to Encounter Week Coordinator and bike tour leader Chance Cardamone



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Knewstub. “Circumnavigating the lake from our school really defines our place in the world, and the fact that we used our own power instead of fossil fuels is consistent with the mission of our school,” says Cardamone Knewstub. Vermont Commons is known for its emphasis on experiential education, ecological stewardship and community service.

This is the first time Vermont Commons has taken the entire ninth grade class on the Lake Champlain bike tour (a.k.a. *Tour de Creemee*). “We normally take the ninth graders on a 5-day backcountry camping trip, but one down side had been that we had to divide them into three groups to get backcountry permits,” explained Cardamone Knewstub. “This meant three separate trips which made it difficult us to focus on team building. The bike trip was great because we could all stay together allowing the class as a whole to bond.” According to new VCS ninth grader, Lilly Cartularo, the bike tour helped her feel more comfortable with her new classmates.

The Lake Champlain bike tour was one of seven field-based adventures offered last week as part of the Vermont Commons School Encounter Week program. The other offerings included Adirondack Canoeing, Impressionist Painting, Food Preservation, Day Hikes in Vermont, Exploring Cape Cod, and a trip to Acadia National Park.

Encounter Week is one of the defining features of a Vermont Commons education, preparing students to move out of the classroom and into the world. For more information about the school, please visit [www.vermontcommons.org](http://www.vermontcommons.org) or attend the VCS Fall Open House on Sunday, November 8<sup>th</sup>. Please call 865-8084 to RSVP.

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**About Vermont Commons School:** Vermont Commons School is an independent day school for students in grades 7 – 12. The school offers a rigorous, college preparatory curriculum that includes a focus on community service and experiential education. The mission of the Vermont Commons School is to provide a vision of education that crosses traditional boundaries and develops ecological citizenship, with the goal of empowering students with the knowledge, character, skills, and moral vision necessary to become responsible, pro-active members of the world community.

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