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Press Release

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Vermont Commons Hike-a-thon Supports Need-based Scholarship Fund

The Parents Association at Commons School (PACS) is organizing the Onward Upward Vertical Challenge, a hike-a-thon up Mt. Philo on Saturday, May 17. VCS Students are currently gathering pledges from family and friends of the School for each vertical foot they hike. "The more times they can hike up the 380-foot ascent between 9 am and 12 noon, the more money we will raise," explains Sarah McGarghan, the chair of the fundraiser. "Our goal is to raise \$12,000 for the Vermont Commons need-based scholarship fund and to have a fun, community-building event."

Last year, approximately 30% of the students at Vermont Commons received some form of financial aid. All awards are based on need, and the average scholarship was about \$10,000 -- roughly 60% of the cost of tuition at the small, independent school in South Burlington. Vermont Commons is committed to making scholarships available to qualified students to maintain a diverse and well-rounded community.

One alumna who benefitted from the small class sizes and individualized attention at Vermont Commons is Nissa Kauppila of Monkton. Nissa received a full scholarship to attend Vermont Commons her sophomore, junior and senior years. "I did the research and initiated the process in 1998 when the VCS was brand new," notes Nissa. "I wanted a smaller school where the teachers would know my name. What impressed me most was that the faculty and administrators respected my needs and treated me like an adult. It was clear that they trusted me and wanted to help me explore my passion for art -- which was pretty amazing considering there was no formal art program at that time* at Vermont Commons."

The VCS faculty connected Nissa with resources and mentors at UVM and provided her with the support and programs she needed to pursue her passion for art. By her senior year, Nissa had compiled an impressive academic record and portfolio that earned her a scholarship to attend the Rhode Island School



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of Design, one of the most prestigious art schools in the world. She has since graduated from RISD with a degree in Film

Today, Nissa lives in South Burlington and works for CCTV's Media Works for YOUth program providing documentary film instruction for at-risk youth (ages 15-22). She is grateful to have had the opportunity to attend Vermont Commons and is considering a career in teaching, maybe even at Vermont Commons. Asked about the impact of the scholarship program at VCS, Nissa says "it's so important to integrate all demographics in a school... to break down barriers and stereotypes."

The funds raised from the Onward Upward Vertical Challenge will provide opportunities for more students like Nissa to choose the educational setting that is best to help them explore their passions and realize their dreams. To learn more about the Onward Upward Vertical Challenge or to make a pledge, please visit www.vermontcommons.org/mt-philo. To learn more about Vermont Commons, visit www.vermontcommons.org.

About Vermont Commons School:

Vermont Commons School is an independent day school for college-bound 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. For more information, please visit www.vermontcommons.org.

*NOTE: Vermont Commons now has a well-respected visual arts program. Two members of the Class of 2008 have been accepted and plan to attend Parson's School of Design (Mariel Bennett) and Rhode Island School of Design (Johns Congdon).

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