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Press Release

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Contact: Wendy McArdle
Phone: 865-8084 x31



Vermont Commons Students Prepare for Encounter Week An Out of the Classroom Experience for Students and Faculty

PLEASE COME to Vermont Commons School on Monday, September 22nd 8:00 am to interview and photograph Vermont Commons students and faculty as they pack up and hit the road for Encounter Week.

Encounter Week is one of the defining features of a Vermont Commons education. It is an opportunity for students and faculty to explore the wilderness and community by participating in intensive field-based programs. Encounter Weeks are a chance to step away from the classroom, to experience something new, and to connect with faculty and classmates across the grade levels in a unique and special way.

75 Green Mountain Drive • South Burlington, VT 05403
phone (802) 865-8084 • fax (802) 865-2429
www.vermontcommons.org



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Many Vermont Commons alumni report that their strongest and fondest memories of their time at VCS are of the various Encounter Weeks they participated in while enrolled at the school.

Encounter Week happens three times during the school year at Vermont Commons. Below is a summary of the Encounter Week programs offered this fall, starting on Monday, September 22.

9th grade backpacking (Overnight trip): All 9th graders will go on a 5 day backpacking trip. They will be divided into 3 groups and will hike in either the Green Mountains or the Adirondacks. This VCS tradition is something of a rite of passage for our 9th graders and marks their transition into high school. Leaders: Conor Driscoll, Jason Cushner, Mark Cline Lucey, Carly Lagasse (VCS Senior), and Taylor Fargo (former student)

Wilderness Leadership and Wilderness First Aid (Overnight Trip): This course is designed to prepare students for working in wilderness leadership positions. Over the course of the week, this group will further their backcountry medical skills, become certified in SOLO Wilderness First Aid, and spend a great portion of their time developing their own leadership styles through discussion and hands-on activities. **The program begins on Sunday** with a four-day backpacking trip in New Hampshire's White Mountains, where we will conduct the leadership training portion of the trip. The group will return from the backcountry on Wednesday afternoon and spend Thursday and Friday at Vermont Commons learning techniques in backcountry medical care from a Wilderness First Aid (WFA) instructor. Upon completion of the 16-hour WFA course on Friday afternoon, students will be certified in Wilderness First Aid. Leader: Hans Manske

Aviation Week (Day Trips)

Students who choose "Aviation Week" will learn about the principles of flight through a range of experiences: by experimenting with simple model airplanes to flying in a general aviation aircraft with a licensed pilot. They will be meeting and working with experienced aviators on daily



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excursions throughout Vermont (no overnights planned thus far) who will share their love of this exhilarating field. Leader: Jessica Redmond and Mike Rosen (Professor of Engineering at UVM)

Acadia (Overnight Trip)

This fall marks VCS' ninth trip to Bar Harbor, Maine and Acadia National Park. We will . . . watch the stars over the Atlantic, climb a cliff-face with nesting eagles circling overhead, swim in the 40-degree ocean, lay face-down on a tide pool watching barnacles feed, play volleyball and Frisbee on the beach, work with the National Park on a service project, take a trip on a lobster boat, see baby seals (you heard me . . . BABY SEALS!!!), enjoy a lobster-feast, and be the first Americans to see the sun rise off the Atlantic from the top of Cadillac Mountain. Leader: Peter Goff

Writer's Retreat, Unplugged

Writer and former VCS parent Judy Chaves and LA teacher Glenn Etter will be leading a writer's retreat based at a cabin on Neal's Pond, a small lake in the Northeast Kingdom. With a variety of daily prompts, Judy and Glenn will help students draw from autobiographical material to produce original written pieces—without laptops, without I-pods, but with plenty of paper and pen and the fine company of other writers. There'll be group discussion of work, one-on-one consultation, short evening readings, as well as plenty of time to boat, swim, search for Neal the resident moose, and simply relax in the cabin. And, of course, we will share home-cooked meals and good times at breakfast, second breakfast, lunch, third breakfast, and dinner. One of the goals is that, by the end of the week, each student will have produced at least one polished story or personal essay that we'll share with the rest of the VCS community in the week following our return. So come join us—it's right to support your right to write! Leaders: Glenn Etter and Judy Chaves (parent of two VCS graduates)

Champlain Cycling tour (AKA Tour de Creemie): The cool thing about this Encounter Week is that it starts and ends right in the VCS parking lot, and we transport ourselves with the power



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of our own legs. Riding our bikes, we will head north out of Burlington and up to South Hero where we'll camp on the beach of a VCS family. The second day we'll continue north until just shy of the Canadian border, where we'll take a left on the bridge to Rouses Point, NY. In NY we'll head south to Cumberland Head where we'll stay with another VCS family. The third day takes up some hills as we continue south to Westport, NY. Day 4, we cross the Crown Point Bridge back to Vermont and camp in Button Bay. Day 5 we should make it back to school by early afternoon. This trip is challenging but not impossibly so. The majority of participants typically have no experience with cycle touring. The only real requisites are that participants have a bike that works and that they are familiar with, that they have a helmet, and that they be willing to push themselves and be safe. In the past, students have used both mountain bikes and road bikes and been fine. We will have a support vehicle with us that will carry our gear. Leaders: Chance Cardamone-Knewstub and Mary Hamilton Homer (Parent)

Fiber Arts in Vermont: "Wool / A warm and fuzzy outlook: Where fashion meets farming."

At one point, not too long ago, sheep outnumbered people in Vermont. During the mid-Nineteenth Century, Vermont enjoyed an economically rewarding period producing and spinning wool, and later producing textiles in mills such as the Woolen Mill in Winooski. As part of this Encounter Week, we'll visit mills, sheep farms, and Fiber Arts shops to discuss the nature of most textiles—knit or woven. Most importantly, we'll create our own knitting project by choosing density, twist, color, and pattern. No experience is necessary. Students will have a chance to try spinning wool, but we'll focus primarily on learning the characteristics of wool, (it rivals nearly all the technical wear at EMS!) and the artistic process of creating articles of clothing. Leader: Cara Simone Bader

NOTE: The title is taken from a headline in the New York Times about the reviving wool market.

For more information about Encounter Week, please contact Conor Driscoll at 865-8084 ext. 32 or Chance Cardamone-Knewstub at 865-8084 x 21

About Vermont Commons School:

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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.

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