



VERMONT COMMONS SCHOOL

MOVING OUT OF THE CLASSROOM AND INTO THE WORLD

Press Release

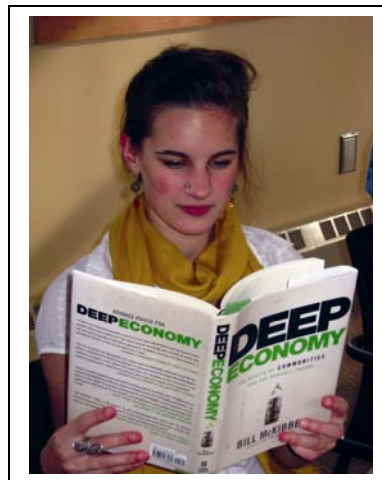
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VCS Students Explore the Wealth of Our Local Communities

The Senior Social Studies class at Vermont Commons School takes a close look at what local people are doing to increase community vitality, raise levels of health and happiness, and decrease our carbon emissions and dependence on fossil fuels. Below is a description of the class written by the instructor, Mark Cline Lucey.

This has been an inspiring and eye-opening semester at Vermont Commons School in Social Studies 6: Ecological Economics. Using *Deep Economy*, by Middlebury College Professor Bill McKibben, as our main text and the basis of our curriculum, we have explored McKibben's central thesis that a reorientation toward local economies, community mindedness, and neighborliness, is necessary for addressing climate change and peak oil, as well as human happiness and connectedness. We've had impassioned classroom discussions and the students have written reflections on topics ranging from their definition of community and their thoughts on personal responsibility to ones community, to their personal path to happiness or their role within a consumer society.



Most recently, we have shifted from analyzing the problems to taking a look at what Vermonters are doing to address them. This orientation "out of the classroom and into the world" has brought practical reality, with all its joys and challenges, into clearer focus for VCS students.

We visited the Burlington Cohousing development and spoke with Joan Knight about the cohousing movement and why she has worked for years to build a place where residents can intentionally increase their interaction and cooperation with neighbors. We met with Adele Dieno at the offices of Local Motion and heard about their efforts to "increase the incentives for human-powered transportation and the disincentives for fossil fuel-powered movement." Mitch Wertlieb and Melody Bodette at Vermont Public Radio gave us a tour of the station and talked with us about the technical and practical aspects of radio, as well as the role that listener-supported radio plays in keeping a community strong and connected. Bill



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Maclay of Maclay Architects met with us to talk about the amazing possibilities of green design for increasing our efficiency, and decreasing our emissions of carbon and other pollutants. After the holiday break, VCS Seniors will have a chance to meet with Ron Miller, a leader in the local Transition Towns movement, as well as Ed Antczak of Burlington's Community and Economic Development Office.

Closely linked to this class, both Ron Krupp and Kathryn Blume will both be coming to Vermont Commons to speak to the student body in January. Ron Krupp will talk about his new book *Lifting The Yoke: Local Solutions To America's Farm And Food Crisis*. The book deals with many of the farm and food issues that are in the news on a daily basis: globalization, hunger and obesity - and offers local, sustainable, and very practical solutions. Ron Krupp is also the author of *The Woodchuck's Guide to Gardening*, which received the Christian Science Monitor's Garden Book of the Year award for New England in 2002. He has been a Vermont Public Radio Garden and Farm Commentator for the past 8 years and has been involved with farm and food issues for 35 years -- having started the Brattleboro Farmers' Market in the early 70s, coordinated the Tommy Thompson Community Garden in the Intervale for 15 years and published the Green Mountain Farmer in the early 1980s. Kathryn Blume is an actress, activist and all-around dynamic person who recently performed her solo show, *The Boycott*, in Copenhagen during the climate talks.

Vermont is truly an inspiring place to live! Bill McKibben is correct that there is a great deal of wealth (of the social capital variety) in our community, and it is an honor to make that community part of our classrooms here at Vermont Commons School.

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. Vermont Commons School students experience a unique blend of academics and global emersion, master fundamental academic disciplines, grasp the profound interdependence of the natural and human systems they inhabit, and graduate with the values, knowledge, skills and commitment necessary to become ethical and engaged ecological citizens. For more information, please visit www.vermontcommons.org.*

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