

November 15, 2011

# TURTLE TRACKS

A WEEKLY EMAIL NEWSLETTER FOR THE VERMONT COMMONS SCHOOL COMMUNITY

## UPCOMING EVENTS

|                               |                       |                        |                    |                       |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>November 17</b>            | <b>November 21-25</b> | <b>November 27</b>     | <b>November 30</b> | <b>December 1</b>     |
| PACS Coffee<br>Hour 7:45-9 AM | Thanksgiving Break    | Leunig's<br>Fundraiser | Noon Dismissal     | Sibling Shadow<br>Day |

## Leunig's Trips Fundraiser 11/27



Save the date! Vermont Commons School will be the featured non-profit on Sunday, November 27th at Leunig's. Leunig's will donate 10% of all sales for the day, and all proceeds will benefit the Trips Program. So, bring your out-of-town relatives to Church Street to shop for the holidays and to have a meal at the bistro. This is a great opportunity for everyone to socialize and showcase our school in the heart of Burlington. Look for our banner and our t-shirts on the wait staff!

Besides enjoying an amazing meal, patrons can buy raffle tickets for another meal at Leunigs from VCS students. One more way to support our Trips Program: Purchase a Leunigs Community Card which allows the holder to get 20% off of meals at Leunigs for a year. Buy a card for \$50, and VCS receives \$25! If you own a card and renew, VCS will receive the entire amount, \$50! Community Card Sales will be donated to VCS for the entire month. If you can't make it to the restaurant, feel free to drop off a check for \$50 at Liz's desk, and we'll purchase the card for you. Please stop by wearing your VCS clothing to see a few student performances, eat a great meal, and support our Trips Program!

## Sibling Shadow Day 12/1



Please mark your calendars! Sibling Shadow Day has been scheduled for Thursday, December 1st and brothers and sisters of current VCS students, who are in fifth grade, or older, are invited to spend the day at our school attending classes. We will have a special green gray competition and siblings will attend classes and get to experience a day at our school. Please register for this event by calling Sarah Soule, Director of Admissions, 865-8084, ext, 27, or email: [ssoule@vermontcommons.org](mailto:ssoule@vermontcommons.org) by Friday, November 18, 2011.

## PACS Coffee Hour—11/17 from 7:30-8:30 AM



The next PACS sponsored Coffee Hour will be held on Thursday, November 17th from 7:45-9 AM. Please join us for some light refreshments and a great opportunity to mingle with other parents, faculty and staff!

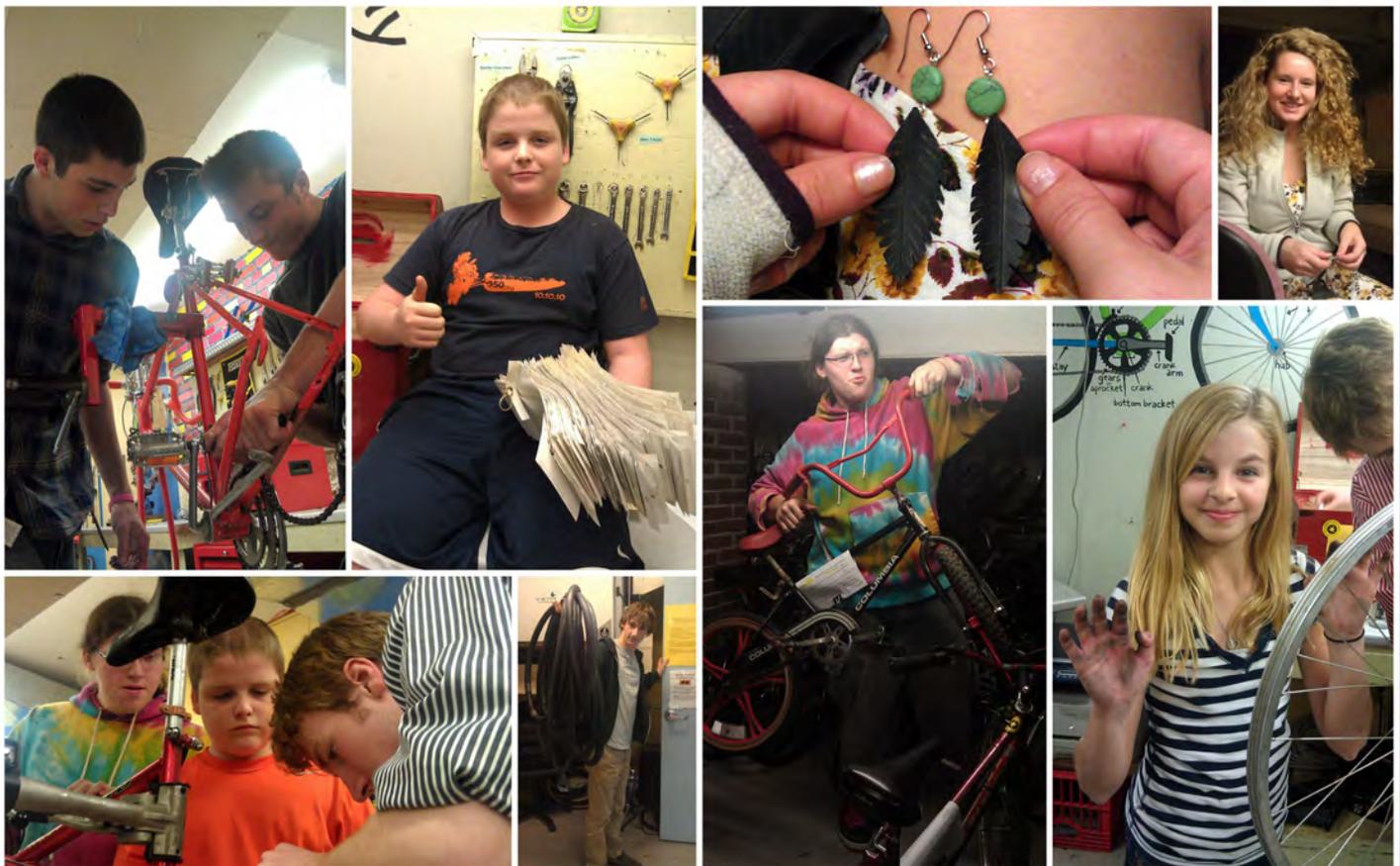
## Barnes & Noble Fundraiser 12/11



Please join us on December 11th for our very own Barnes and Noble Bookfair. Throughout the day we will have a choral concert, open mic, poetry readings and children's story telling. VCS will have a welcome table hosted by parents to talk with anyone interested in the school. If you make a purchase, in any Barnes and Noble store, on Dec. 11th and present our school code we will receive between 10-20% of the sale. If you cannot make it to a store on the 11th, you may make purchases online from Dec. 11-16th by visiting [bn.com/bookfairs](http://bn.com/bookfairs) and entering our school code. The proceeds of this event will benefit our winter Trips Program. **Our school code is 10569150.** Thank you for the support!

## Bike Recycling Research and Service—by Ben Wang

The Bikes and Community Research and Service class has been spending Wednesday afternoons at Local Motion's [Bike Recycle Vermont](#) shop in Burlington. The students have settled into a groove wrenching on bikes, making jewelry for [Bike Recycle Designs](#), and generally helping around the shop. We have also been exploring topics surrounding Bike Recycle's two-fold mission: providing transportation for low-income Vermonters and giving old bikes new lives and keeping them out of the waste stream. Activities on campus have included using Google Maps to track carbon footprints and watching videos describing refugee experiences. Students also worked to plan and execute a very successful bike drive, and groups are now working on a wide range of projects, including a video project featuring a Rube Goldberg machine made of bike parts, new Bike Recycle Designs concepts, a bake sale, and a new door sign/mural. We are all looking forward to continuing the rhythm into the second quarter.



## Annual Fund Donations –by Shona Mossey, *Annual Fund Chair*



The VCS Annual Fund is in full swing! I hope our entire community will consider a gift to our Annual Fund as part of their year end giving. So far, we have heard from more former parents, alumni, staff, friends and Board members than current parents! I hope that all VCS parents will remember that our Annual Fund supports school needs that are not met by tuition, such as E-Weeks, our World Languages Program, and student financial aid. Gifts to the Annual Fund are tax deductible, and greatly appreciated! Donations may be made on our website, or sent to Sarah Judd in the Development Office. Thank you!

## “Raindrops” –by Nora Hill



*Nora Hill's poem "Raindrops" was selected from 7,000 entries to be in the Young Writers' Project published anthology. There was a reception on Nov 12th at the Winooski Mill for all of the poets and their families to celebrate this publication.*



Nora at the Young Writers' Project reception

Welcome to a world where just being you is never enough  
The real world  
Young and innocent  
we are told  
to be ourselves,  
To be bold  
but as we grow  
we learn the truth  
that we are born to be molds  
the perfect soldier  
a fake smile here a fake laugh there  
just want to  
scream  
loud and clear  
but that's just a dream  
an improbability  
because I don't scream  
not any more  
I can't even whisper like the wind  
how can I ever roar like the lion.  
alone, shattered, misunderstood and misjudged  
the doll stands herself up  
the spider web of cracks on her face creak  
as they blow dust off to face the sun  
because sometimes we have to rescue ourselves  
sometimes we have to be our own prince charming  
the doll smiles  
she never had cared for fairy-tales  
too predictable  
In an unpredictable world  
they weave a false sense of security  
the doll with a spider web face  
turns to them  
and  
Roars  
loud, pure, raw  
a beautiful disaster  
a glitch  
like raindrops falling up  
because sometimes,  
we do things that *defy gravity*.

## LA 9 Student Submissions –by Christie Beveridge

*The theme of the ninth grade Language Arts class is Away from Home: Travel Narratives. Since the 9th graders embark on the biking Encounter Week in September, their first writing assignment was to write a personal essay about the challenges of this journey. I asked students to reflect on the physical and emotional elements of the trip, as well as describe the landscape through which they biked. They wrote a first draft of the essay, and then took part in workshops in which their peers offered feedback to help them improve their writing. As someone who has taken part in the trip, I felt that they captured the experience beautifully!*

### Mikhal Yudien

The body is a fascinating and mysterious object. It is controlled by muscles, bones, blood and, most of all, the mind. Any physical experiences of pain, soreness, or even twitch-related un-comfortableness that I encountered were enough to leave me stupefied by the fact that I completed the trip without a single physical breakdown in the middle of the one foot-wide “bike lane” that only existed by, well, a strip of paint. Throughout the trip, I came upon the realization that all physical hardships cannot overcome the mental well-being of an athlete. This is not to say that my physical misery did not exist, but that, by the final Friday, I had figured out how to overcome it. As an example, every day the tough rubber grip of my handlebars was enough to numb half of my hand and leave me awkwardly groping at my food as I ate my meals. The immobilizing pain that surrounded my muscles seemed to squeeze and release my calves like an anaconda, slowly crushing the bones of a miniscule, unsuspecting rodent. Lastly, but definitely not the least painful experience was the last hour of biking on Tuesday. My legs shut down, my brain turned off, and to my overall humiliation, I slowed down to the point that I was not able to see my fellow suffering companions. My body was closing up shop, and for all I knew, the keys were being buried. The physical exertion I needed to push myself through this trip was something that was impossible to muster as I was shielded by the agony and stress of the pride-eating and muscle-crunching sport called biking.



### Jordanna Dulaney

The landscape was what kept the trip entertaining, though. The highways, I hated the most. The trucks that rumbled by me, honking and spraying grit and hot exhaust in my face. The drivers that glared at me from their vans, sports cars, and logging trucks. The foot-wide bike lanes where animals dragged themselves to crap and to die bloody, smashed-up, insignificant deaths. I flinched every time a car honked or a truck passed by only a few inches away from my frail body and bike. The only grace the highways had was their flatness. I made a promise to myself on the highways: when or if I ever became a driver, I vowed I would be the nicest car in Vermont to bikers. Trust me, they deserve it. The road that never ended on Tuesday, which was like walking through the Impressionist wing of the Met, only plus bike, wind, and sweat. The brushstrokes of the land were made by the headwind, painted with delicate and pure golds, greens, and browns with the brilliant blue sky to contrast and the sun to shadow. The hills were what I learned to hate, though. They rose over me, making me feel like a gnat staring up at God’s giant middle finger to me, jutting out of the earth like nobody’s business. They cut off the sun and sky and threw shadows like warning signs when I biked up to meet them. They beat me up and left me panting on the side of the road, clutching my bike and realizing that a hunk of rock and dirt could bring me to the verge of hysteria. The ridiculousness of it was almost laughable. Remembering them all now in my mind’s eye reminds me of a squadron of soldiers, doing battle with 12 fourteen-year-olds and, frankly, kicking their butts. The only friendly hill was the last one: the one on IDX Drive that smiled to us like a friend and waved us in for punch and cookies. It was the truce between us bikers and the hills, the agreement that we would now stay a healthy distance away from each other.



## ***...Encounter Week excerpts continued...***

### **Danny Kaufmann**

Oh, the pain. My bike doesn't coast; it's too big and too heavy, and I just have to turn my head to see Adrian's, a light racing bike that glides along the road like it is floating across the sky. That was my painful experience in Lake Champlain, the location of one of the most challenging trips I have ever done. The trip showed me the real meaning of long distances, and how dependent we have become on cars. Sometimes in the trip the distances would become a pain, but the scenery made it worth my while. The trip gave us the opportunity to forget about the stressful modern world, while allowing us to enjoy an ever changing background. When on a trip like the one we took, bikes give us a point of view we don't see when inside a car. This trip gave me a completely different view of the new place I call home. At the same time, it showed me there are still natural places in which the landscape looks like it hasn't been touched by the human race.



### **Nora Hill**

The bike trip was the first Encounter Week that I was afraid of. I am not a great biker. In fact, before this trip going fast on a bike freaked me out. I was also nervous about how I would act. On all of my previous Encounter Weeks, I have been in my element, and a leader. In the weeks approaching the bike trip, I worried that I might lose that trait and let Chance, Jasmine, and my class down. What if I didn't help out as much as I usually did? What if I started whining and my group became upset with me? And my biggest fear: what if I just couldn't do it? Of course I didn't tell anyone, except my mom, any of these fears. Looking back, I wish I had talked about my fears with my class, but I have trouble being vulnerable around others, especially people whom I don't know. In some ways I envy people who can open up and reveal their fears because just the thought of that scares me. I believe that because of all my fears and concerns around this Encounter Week, I grew the most while on it. True, there are a few choices I regret, but I now trust the people in my class much more, and I grew as a person. This Encounter Week scared me more than my first, but I'm so proud and happy that I did it.



### **Giselle Glaspie**

The landscape on this trip was beautiful. Rolling hills of lush green spilling into that glistening basin of sapphire; the trees about to burst into flame. Monday was perhaps the best day in all aspects, yet was not my favorite. Beautiful scenery, a mere thirty-five mile bike ride, and the fact that we were all caught up on sleep put us in high spirits that night; we were lulled us into a false sense of security. Crawling across the 58th mile on Tuesday, although I was dead tired, was quite inspirational. The soft chorus of waves lapping the shore soothed my aching body, as did the setting sun. That night, the Homers' living room floor felt like a cloud. The only scenery I remember from Wednesday was viewing the particularly evil-looking slopes up ahead, which turned out to be only slightly less vertical than they looked. Thursday was a blur. The most vivid memory from that day was hearing my plastic spoon scrape the bottom of a pint of frozen yogurt outside of Stewart's after that dreadful hill. At Button Bay that night, when Jasmine announced that we would have a half hour of relaxation time, I admittedly felt dejected. We had just finished a game of touch football, which wasn't really football because about three people actually knew how to play. Anyway, I donned my white rain poncho—or rather, my marshmallow costume; the wind fills it when I'm biking and makes me look edible—and headed down to the lake. It was not until I sat on a bench and put my feet up that I realized how much I needed a moment to myself, just to be able to hear my own thoughts. I became in tune with the natural world, studying a grasshopper that blended in with the stones, a drop of water on the end of a leaf. I heard fish jump, watched the sky transform—from periwinkle to lemon to tangerine, then finally, the murky charcoal of twilight. It was magnificent.



## Delayed Opening Policy –by Cara Simone



Dear VCS Community, **we will use Parent Alert to notify our community of any school closings or delays.** In order to receive an alert on your cell phone (we will also send an alert to your home phone) we will need your number on file in Ren-Web. To make sure we have your information on file, please check the webforms on ParentsWeb. You may add students' phone numbers as well. Our status will also be posted on the local television stations and our website.

When the snow finally comes, and school is potentially delayed, we will run a truncated, not a condensed, schedule. For example, if school is delayed by one hour, we will begin with Morning Meeting at 9:15 and begin 2nd period at 9:40, as usual. If school is delayed two hours, we will meet for a Morning Meeting at 10:15, and begin 3rd period at 10:40.

Happy Winter!

## This Week in Photos



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