

JANUARY 19, 2014

TURTLE TRACKS

A WEEKLY E-NEWSLETTER FOR THE VERMONT COMMONS SCHOOL COMMUNITY

UPCOMING EVENTS

Jan. 19-23
Encounter Week

January 21
Encounter Week
Parent Dinner

January 24
SATs

January 26
School Closed
for Students

Alumni Return for Annual “First Friday” Event

Some of our alumni recently returned to VCS for our annual First Friday event. They visited with former teachers, spoke with our juniors and seniors about their

college and career experiences, and met with our new Head of School, Dexter Mahaffey. A special day for all! Welcome home, Vermont Commons alumni!



Senior Eli Hulse Named as Finalist in Essay Contest

Vermont Commons senior Eli Hulse has been named a finalist in Sen. Bernie Sanders' Fifth Annual State of the Union Essay Contest. Eli's essay was chosen as one of the top 20 finalists out of 400 submissions!

Eli was invited to discuss and read his essay at a roundtable discussion at the State House, hosted by Senator Sanders.

Congratulations, Eli!



Annual Fund 2014-15 Update

Mary Hamilton



Everyone has a role to play; everyone has a way to give!

Thank you to everyone who has donated so far to the Annual Fund! We are presently at \$98,084.80 or 56% of our goal of \$175,000 and that with only 31% of our parent community participating! Our goal, as it was last year and in every year going forward, is 100% parent participation! Please show how much Vermont Commons School, our community, our teachers and our students mean to you.

Please take a moment and [click](#) on the link to give online. Or drop a check in the mail. And, if you have any questions, I am waiting by the phone to give you some answers!

Documentary Series Part II: *The Internet's Own Boy*

Please join us for a screening of the film *The Internet's Own Boy*, on January 28 from 6 to 9 p.m. in the Commons Room. The film examines the life and work of Aaron Swartz, and explores the implications of the interplay between technology and our civil liberties.

Guest panelists for a discussion following the film will include **Brian Knappenberger, Martha Reid, Bill Simmon and Cathleen Stadecker.**

This event is free and open to the public.



Senior Social Studies at Vermont Commons: The 20% Time Project

Mark Cline Lucey

“Autonomy, mastery & purpose are the three keys to human motivation.”

-Daniel Pink, Drive

A central goal of the Vermont Commons Social Studies program is to nurture students who are effective and engaged global citizens. To that end, we strive to teach our students to create their own questions, do their own research, and form their own conclusions with their learning. Why? The world is a collaborative, communicative and rapidly evolving place, and Vermont Commons graduates will be asked to be innovative and create the next solutions. We must allow them to be autonomous learners - to set goals and then to implement, reflect on, redirect and showcase those goals. In this Infor-

mation Age, young people also need to learn to research, organize, create, cite and publish information.

The 20% Time Project is an opportunity for students to practice these essential skills. The concept is simple. Allow students 20% of class time, or one in every 5 class periods, to follow a personal passion through the creation of a globally-oriented project.

The Vermont Commons Social Studies department also seeks to prepare globally competent students by helping them learn how to investigate complex and pertinent matters of global significance. This practice can encourage students to recognize their own and others' perspectives and communicate their positions clearly. Most importantly, preparing to work

in a global economy will require that students learn to take action. It requires that they learn to identify opportunities for productive action and develop and carry out plans. Globally competent students view themselves as informed, thoughtful, and effective contributors to changing times.

Since September, each of our eight seniors has been developing their own 20% Time Project, and they are ready to share their progress with the rest of the community. We urge you to read (and follow!?) their blogs, where you will find their official project proposals, as well as their weekly reflections on their progress and additional research on their issues.

Read their project description and find links to their blogs on the next page.



Members of Vermont Commons' 2015 Senior Class, with teachers Jessica Redmond & Mark Cline Lucey

Making Remote Health Care Affordable

Jamie Benson

My [project](#) is to create a small form-factor sub \$100 combination vein finder and pulse oximeter for use in low income areas and developing nations. A pulse oximeter is a device which uses infrared and visible light reflected off of blood cells to determine how oxygenated a patient's blood is, as well as their heart rate. This blood oxygenation value, or SPO2 reading, combined with the heart-rate monitoring, provides health care experts with a quick window into a patient's overall status, and can alert them to a host of potential problems.



Maps, Maps, Maps!

Griffin Cannon

I am creating this [project](#) to help give people (students and others) a better understanding of the world around them through the use of a complete, factual, and interactive map system. I will be working to create a single map with layers that will try to explore a wide range of measures that define people and countries socially, economically, politically, and militarily. In doing so I hope that any reader will be able to obtain a better understanding of the complicated system that is our world.



Infectious Diseases: The Unknown Impact of Climate Change

Nora Hill

This [project](#) will focus on a campaign to pass Bill 2864. This Bill has climate health legislation that is crucial to the fight against climate change. This project has the goal of spreading interest, knowledge and support, but also trying to get this Bill passed. I am undertaking this project because I believe that it is vital that my generation be knowledgeable about this topic; we must change if we are going to survive. By spreading knowledge for Bill 2864 I am not only helping to promote legislation, but also informing my generation of some of the issues posed by climate change. I intend to make a Facebook page and utilize several other forms of social media in order to spread awareness, make posters, and contact senators.



Komett: Let's Free the Internet

Eli Hulse

There is a huge need for a revolutionary way to communicate online. Every person has his or her own opinion, so when the comments and critiques of an article are displayed in a linear fashion, they preclude any sorting in an understandable way. Komett is an application that allows for the creation and organization of comments. This will allow users to view other users' thoughts based on a set of criteria. This [project](#) has three main objectives. The first is to provide a platform for users to view other people's opinions. The second is to provide a way to comment at a specific location in an article. The third is to provide a platform for debate within and across political opinions.



Two Wheels to the Fortune

Adrian Kelly

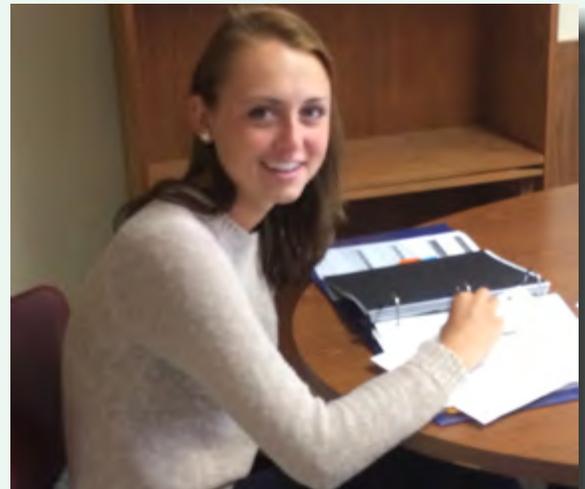
My [project](#) is to build a modular electric bicycle system. I chose this project not only because I thought it would be fun to build and ride, but also because climate change and air pollution are going to be increasingly large problems in the coming years. From what I've seen, there is an absence of electric bikes that are cheap, relatively easy to install, powerful, and efficient. The final reason I am doing this project is that I think I will learn a lot about the designing and building process, and this is something that I intend to actually use, so hopefully I will also learn how to make this bike more reliable than my projects have been in the past.

Poetry, Politics, and Perspective

Hayley Kingston

My [project](#) is a poetry contest for people of all ages, nationalities, religions, etc. Each poet will be addressing a prompt on women's education. I am doing this project to follow my passion for poetry and use it to make a difference. By addressing the issue of women's education through poetry, I can combine two of my interests.

My goal is to get as many submissions as possible. The competition will be spread via social media and physical posters all over the world. My final goal is to gather these poems and put them together digitally. Then I will spread this and get the word out about women's education.



Out of the Western Lowlands and Into Vermont

Grace Seeley

Ever since I was little, I have always loved apes. My mom and I would watch movies that featured them on a regular basis, and I always connected with their emotional capacity, intelligence, and communication skills.

This [project](#) aims to educate Chittenden County communities about primate conservation. Its primary product will be the creation and implementation of classroom curricula for both elementary and high school level students. These educational opportunities will result in motivation to participate in project activities and fundraisers. The ideal outcome will be emotional investment and awareness about the plight of the Great Apes.



Art and Knowledge: Maternal Health Edition

Mikhal Yudien

Although there have been numerous global initiatives to raise awareness about and to gather support for maternal health, there has been minimal local action taken. Thus, my [project](#) addresses the local aspect of this global issue in an attempt to attract the attention of Vermonters. As we in New England are incredibly fortunate in that we do not struggle with matters of maternal health, there are many in our community who have not been informed of how grim the situation is on the international level. In my final project, I will reach out to our community in the most effective form that I have experienced: through captivating photography and specific, personal stories.

I will be creating an expressive and poignant set of informational posters that will speak to a variety of people. I will capture an assortment of photographs that will be related to motherhood, women and infants both realistically and abstractly. I will also research and compile the most valuable and moving information available to me (including both statistical data and personal accounts).



Don't forget to visit and follow our students' blogs!

Penguin Plunge 2015!

Mark Cline Lucey

Vermont Commons is celebrating its 10th year of participating in the Burlington Penguin Plunge! Over the years, the Frozen Turtles have raised thousands of dollars to benefit Special Olympics Vermont, and we're hoping to break our record (\$5,000 in 2013) this year.

We'll be plunging into Lake Champlain on February 7th. Please consider joining the team and, if that's a little much for you, then please consider donating to one or more of our plungers. Visit our team page at <http://www.firstgiving.com/team/281806> to register or donate!



Vermont Commons to Celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr.



Upon our students' return from Winter Encounter Week, Vermont Commons will spend time the following week celebrating the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

On Tuesday, January 27th, we will be showing the trailer for the acclaimed film *Selma*, and students will be invited to walk with us to Palace 9 on Thursday, after school, to watch the movie.

On Wednesday, we will be watching an informational film on Dr. King's life and work, and on Thursday and Friday we will be watching his Nobel Prize acceptance speech and his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, respectively.

Parent/Faculty Jam Session!

Jennifer Cohen

Parents & Faculty are invited to a jam session next Friday, January 30th, at 3:30pm, here at the school! Bring your instrument of choice, and we'll see what we can do!

School Closed for Students, Monday, January 26th

A quick reminder to parents & students that Vermont Commons will be closed for students on Monday, January 26th, after Encounter Week. We will resume classes on Tuesday the 27th.

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ENGAGING STUDENTS WITH THE WORLD