



NOVEMBER 1ST, 2013

TURTLE TRACKS

A WEEKLY EMAIL NEWSLETTER FOR THE VERMONT COMMONS SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Upcoming Events

November 3rd
VCS Open House

November 6th
9th Grade Class Dinner

November 8-10th
Brown University
Model U.N.

November 13th
10th & 11th Grade
Class Dinner

VCS Presents: Spooky Stories to Chill Your Spine!

This Halloween season, VCS hosted a Halloween Writing Contest with winning works submitted from students, faculty, and parents. The rules were simple: begin the work with the phrase “The footsteps kept getting louder,” and keep the project to 500 words or less.

The contest judges are pleased to announce our winners! From the student body: Galen Fastie and Lauren Howe; from the faculty: Jessica Redmond and Cara Simone; and from the parent community: Philip Oldham and Linda Gilpin.

We are proud to share these works with our community! Please scour through the winning stories and poems throughout this week’s issue of Turtle Tracks. Enjoy (if you dare)!



Student Winners

Lauren Howe

Galen Fastie

The footsteps keep getting louder.
I hear the heavy steps across the ground.
The footsteps kept getting louder.
Here I was thinking I'd never be found.
What manner of creature is this?
Who comes and lurks through passages and halls?
Do the shadows give you your bliss?
I wonder this as I hear footsteps fall.
The skeleton trees squeak and sway.
The bloodshot sun is leaving the world dim.
Creatures mouth their goodbyes to day.
And I must leave this cupboard that I'm in.
My gaunt, boney structure
Is nimble with youth,
Though I am quite ancient
To tell you the truth.
I hear your pace quicken
As you realize the time.
Does your stomach sicken
As you see that you're mine?
The doors are all locked
And now you must stay
For I am your demon
And you are my prey.
Don't turn around!
I am right here.
Now you have found
The meaning of fear.

Others will come
And follow you're fate.
I'll just slip on back
To my cupboard and wait.

"The footsteps kept getting louder..." he mumbled. "Yes, that would be an excellent opening line." He shuffled through the jumbled papers on his darkened desk, looking for a blank sheet. He found a page with naught but the start of an old story from years past, grabbed a pencil and scribbled his opening line on the paper. "This will be great!" He exclaimed. "The protagonist will be... Edgar North! Just like my name... Yes. Yes... Edgar North. A struggling horror writer. Just like myself... Just like myself." suddenly he was silent. In a flurry of pages, he dove into writing, and in what seemed to Edgar an instant, he had filled his desk with pages.

The book was about a man much akin to himself, a man haunted by strange dreams. Just like in reality. But in fiction, these dreams began to become more than dreams. In fiction, Edgar heard strange footsteps. Footsteps that kept getting louder. "This is perfect," muttered the real Edgar. "Slowly Edgar will be driven mad, haunted by monsters out of his own writing." Edgar was silent for a moment. Then, Thump. Thump. Thump. The footsteps of his dream, the footsteps that haunted his creation. His creation made in his own image. But he wasn't insane. That was Edgar. The other Edgar. Not him. Never him.

Just keep writing, he thought. Writing will make the footsteps stop. Why wouldn't it? He could stop them. He could end them. So he kept writing. He wrote on and on to try and stop the footsteps. But they kept getting louder. Just like he had written. Louder and louder they grew, until they sounded as if they were right outside of his door. Just like in the story. He knew what happened next. The other Edgar had started seeing things, eerie tendrils prying through his walls, eyeballs peeking through his windows. All he could do was write. Then the real Edgar grew frantic, even as he wrote faster and more frantically than ever before. He saw a shadow shift. Dark terrors from the depths of his mind. Horrible visages, watching his every move. Deformed claws, grasping through his walls, trying to pull him into some dark abyss. He had to make the terrors stop. He had to finish the book. Then, he thought of the perfect ending. Just as Edgar North finishes his book, thinking it will stop his nightmares, he is driven mad by a perfect storm of fear. In utmost synchrony, both

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Galen Fastie, continued

Edgars sat down at their desks. Both started writing, the ends of their stories in sight. The day faded as hours of relentless scribbling passed away, and in both worlds, the terrors had ceased. No footsteps were heard outside their doors. No monsters disturbed the completion of their ultimate work. Then the last word was written, there was just one Edgar. And then, as the last Edgar laid down the last page, there was a flash of blinding darkness, and suddenly, neither Edgar remained.



Parent Winners Linda Gilpin

The footsteps kept getting louder. They had found me. Frozen with fear I wracked my brain for a way to escape. Do I run? No they have informers everywhere. Was there someplace to hide? Yeah, right. Not with the sophisticated technology they have at their disposal. This was a professional operation; thorough, efficient, never stopping until they had found their prey. What would they want this time? What would satisfy their voracious appetite?

There was no reason for surprise; I had known for weeks that this day was coming. But that was poor comfort. It didn't stop me from trembling, my heart racing and my forehead beading with sweat. As I waited, I was powerless to keep the images of what lay ahead from filling my mind. "It will only hurt for a moment," they would say. Followed by "it's for the greater good." I knew the whole routine. After all, this wasn't the first time. They had come in years past, and they would come again. And they wouldn't stop with me. They would cut a swath through our midst, few eluding their grasp. There were always those who cowered in fear, watching as the rest resigned themselves to their fate. But I wasn't going to wear that badge of shame. I wasn't ready to live with the knowledge that while I hid others had shouldered the burden, offering up their sacrifice so that the community, our community, could survive.

I knew what I had to do. My suffering would be brief. And once the grim ritual was finished I would bear my sacrifice with pride. I grit my teeth, steadied my hand, and gave them what they had come for. There, it was done. I breathed a sigh of relief, rapidly enveloped by the familiar warmth of knowing I had done the right thing. Their hunger satisfied, however briefly, they left, moving on to their next victim. I could just make out the shadowy figures vanishing into the gathering darkness, my check to the Annual Fund clutched tightly in their hands. The sound of their footsteps gradually faded away; I was safe for another year.

Philip Oldham

The footsteps kept getting louder... as did the snarling that accompanied them. My son clung to my hand next to me. "What are we going to do?" Jess whispered, "We're trapped!"

I looked around his room where we were huddled for anything to protect us, but the books and sneakers strewn about would be of no use fighting the massive beast outside the door.

I decided the window was our only option since I knew we needed to buy some time. Safety was not far away, but sitting here was not going to get us there. The drop to the deep snow drifts on the porch below would be less harmful than any pain the beast would inflict on us.

"We've got to jump for it" I whispered. "No, I can't" he said. But another snarl from the hallway changed his mind.

I motioned "on 3" to Jess. I jumped up, rammed up the window and thrust him out and dangled him as far down as I could before letting go as the beast burst through the door. I felt its claw graze my back as I followed Jess into the snow below and looked up to see the eyes of the beast glaring down at us. Then it turned and I knew it was headed after us... "Run!" I said.

Jess and I tore across the backyard and out into the field. I knew safety was just moments away, but still was not sure we'd make it... just a few more seconds. As we ran, I heard the beast gaining on us quickly and turned to look for a stick or rock only to see it lunging through the air towards Jess.

The beast toppled Jess and he screamed just as the sun's first rays crept over the mountain and burned down on its back... and seconds later Fiona rolled off her brother and staggered groggily to her feet. "Did it happen again?" she asked.

"Fiona Mary Oldham!" I shouted. "I told you last night that moon rise was at 10:42pm and that you were to be in your room with the curtains closed at that time, did I not?"

"Sorry, Dad, I guess I lost track of time" she replied.

"Sorry doesn't cut it. You could have eaten your brother alive! You are positively grounded for the entire night of the next full moon" I replied.

"Aw but Dad, that's not fair... the Homecoming dance is next full moon and I promise to be home before moon-rise next time" Fiona pleaded.

"Until you show me you can be a responsible mature young werewolf you are just going to have to stay home on full moon nights. Now apologize to your brother."

"Sorry Jess, I hope you aren't hurt. Can I make it up to you somehow?"

"Well" Jess replied "I am kind of thirsty..." he replied as he bared his vampire fangs with a smile "so for a little sip of blood, we'll call it even..."



Faculty Winners Jessica Redmond

The footsteps kept getting louder...as was the rapid exhalation that accompanies physical over-exertion. I turned to look. It was obvious that the slightly overweight, late-20s-ish man scurrying down the sidewalk behind me was late for an appointment. He was dressed in shirt, tie, and slacks but his hair was still wet from a shower. He toted a computer bag over one shoulder and cradled several 4-inch three ring binders in his arms. Not sporting a jacket in 42 degree weather, only anxiety could cause the sweat under his arms and on his brow. He stopped in front of a door to his right, looked up, and tentatively approached the door. With his arms full with binders, he contorted to turn the door handle open. A binder slid out his reach and a windfall of unbound papers fell to the ground around him. He yelled an expletive, thereby gaining the attention of several passers-by who tentatively helped him pick up the papers. Thanking them profusely, he shoved them haphazardly back in the offended binder and approached the door again. One of the Good Samaritans opened the door for him, which he was now obliged to go through. As he disappeared in the hallway beyond the door, I stared at the door, then up to a window on the second floor. I saw the man enter the room, dump the binders on a table, and reach for a glass of water. He gulped the liquid down and wiped his face. My eyes lowered. I stepped forward to open the door, smiled, and entered the building. The man was about to face the source of his anxiety.





Seniors Visit Local Energy Investment Company *by Mark Cline-Lucey*

The 12th grade Ecological Economics class visited the Vermont Energy Investment Corporation today to learn about the companies mission of carbon emissions reduction in Vermont. They met with CEO Scott Johnstone and founder Beth Sachs, as well as heat pump expert Jake Marin. The take-away message: Concerned people are doing powerful and innovative things to address climate change!



A Big Thank You!

A big thank you to Natalie Harder for sharing her expertise in video production with our 9th grade Social Studies students! Natalie has joined the students in class to help them work through the many challenges, and learn to make high quality video. The students are currently working on their "History Channel" mini-documentaries exploring the historical accuracy of the Odyssey, which they are reading in their Language Arts class. We'll share the videos with you when they're done!



Open House This Sunday!

A quick reminder that the annual Vermont Commons School Open House is this Sunday, November 3rd at 1pm! Students and community members: please send the word along to parents and families interested in Vermont Commons! Also, feel free to stop by the school and meet with our walk-ins and prospective families and students to talk about life at VCS.



Ecological Economics Seniors Take to the Blogosphere *by Mark Cline-Lucey*

Seven students have chosen to do Contract Honors in their senior Social Studies class: Ecological Economics. Part of their Honors work is to curate a blog on a topic related to the class, with the specific goal of pulling together multiple viewpoints on the issue. If one or more of these blogs interests you, please consider following and even commenting on them. We look forward to an exchange of ideas!

Emil Koenig's blog: <http://ecoeconworldview.blogspot.com>

Miles Lamberson's blog: <http://climatebasedglobalchange.blogspot.com>

Seth Evans' blog: <http://setheconomicsustainability.blogspot.com>

Aidan Villani-Holland's blog: <http://perceivedprogress.blogspot.com>

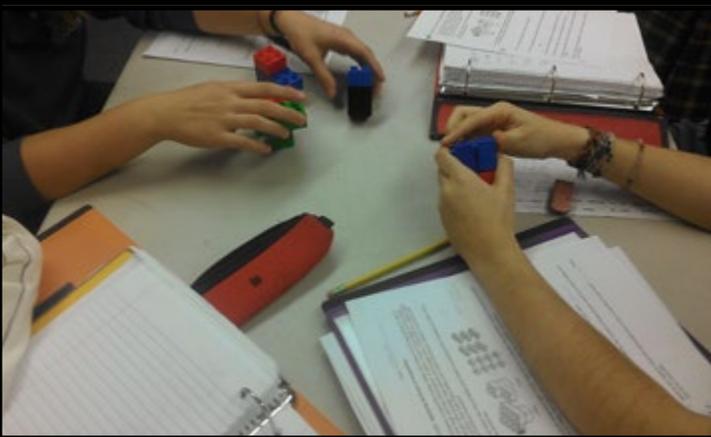
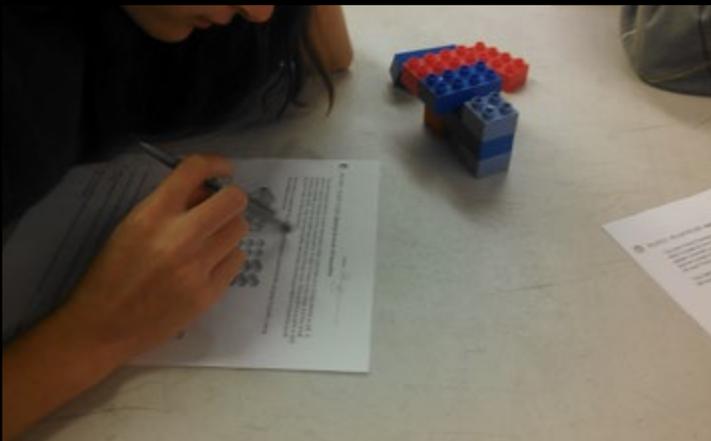
Isabella Carrara's blog: <http://isabeco.blogspot.com>

Spencer Reed's blog: <http://ecologicalinequality.blogspot.com>

Ellis Govoni's blog: <http://theblogofellisgovoni.blogspot.com>

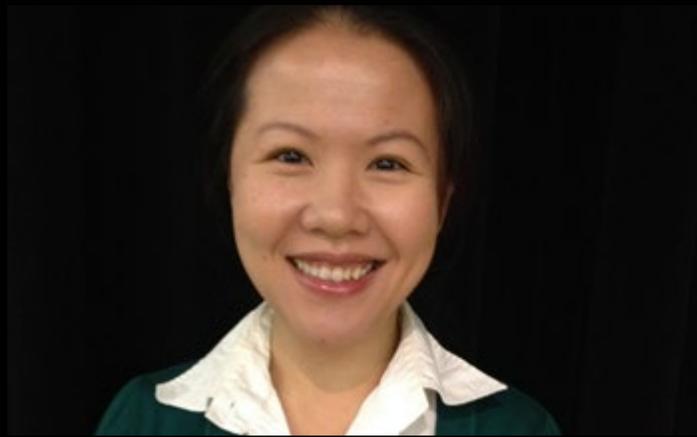
Exploring Math with Legos *by Jasmine Walker*

Freshman Algebra & Geometry students built tables and chairs out of a constrained number of Legos to model meeting an objective using linear inequalities. Check them out below!



Ben Wang Travels to China, *by Adriana Comtois* Shu-fen McKenzie to Cover

Some of you may have heard that Ben Wang left for a trip to China today, and he will return on Nov. 11. While in China, Ben will be exploring opportunities to establish a partnership with sister schools around Shanghai and contacting prospective students for Vermont Commons School. While Ben is away, Shu-fen McKenzie will be covering his classes. Shu-fen is a native Chinese speaker, as well as an experienced and talented teacher at the Vermont Chinese School. Please welcome Shu-fen when you have a minute, and let her know what a great community we have at VCS. Please e-mail me or Ben Wang with any questions. Thank you!



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