

MARCH 13, 2015

TURTLE TRACKS

A WEEKLY E-NEWSLETTER FOR THE VERMONT COMMONS SCHOOL COMMUNITY

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 17
Evening of
Readings

March 20
Big Trips'
Coffee House

March 20
End of
Third Quarter

March 24
6th Grade Day at
Vermont Commons

Capital Campaign for Arts and Science Launched

Mary Hamilton

Vermont Commons has announced the public phase of the Capital Campaign for Arts and Science! Board Chair Brian Leffler and Head of School Dexter Mahaffey kicked off a launch party Tuesday night. While we had a healthy crowd oohing and aahing over the plans for a new Arts Wing, Physics Lab, and classroom spaces, there were also 50 families who attended via live stream and the [YouTube video](#) has been viewed over 300 times.

The Campaign will raise \$850,000 to cover all costs,

including tables, chairs, art supplies, and a 3-D printer. The renovations will finish in time for the opening of the 2015-16 school year in August. **As of today \$647,705 have already been raised!**

If you have questions, concerns, or ideas about this transformative project, please contact Dexter or Mary Hamilton. To help bring this campaign closer to its goal, please click [here](#), or give Mary a call, shoot her an email, or stop by the school!



Photos by Amira Silverman

Capital Campaign (Cont.)

Photos by Amira Silverman



Art Room



Lobby



Physics Lab



Seventh Grade Class Partners with Students in Alabama

Ben Wang

The seventh grade social studies class was invited to participate in the Confederate Flags Project, a North-South collaboration spearheaded by the Brookwood School in Massachusetts. Our class was partnered with eighth-graders at Highlands School in Birmingham, Alabama. We both ran a mock Supreme Court trial, *Defoe v. Spiva*, that pitted a student wearing a Confederate

Flag belt buckle against his school district. Through joint blogs, Skype conversations, and e-mails, the students consulted with each other on their cases and delved into stereotypes, racism, civil rights, and the North-South divide. Our students demonstrated curiosity, open mindedness, and a willingness to share their thoughts and opinions. Kudos to the seventh graders!



China Trip Holds Fundraiser at Zen Gardens

Jasmine Walker

Less than a mile from school, Zen Gardens restaurant agreed to host a fundraiser for the China trip. This past Friday, over thirty students, parents, teachers and friends of the school enjoyed a buffet dinner, conversation and a presentation about the

upcoming China trip. It was a joy to come together as a community, share a meal and help the international trip prepare! Please come to the next big trips fundraiser on Friday March 20 for the Coffeehouse celebration of talent!



It's Cool to Be a Global Citizen!

Katherine Bailey & Mary Hamilton

That's what 5th graders at the Shelburne Community School learned through curriculum designed by Vermont Commons junior Camille Bartsch. Working with "52 Kids," a Charlotte-based foundation, Camille designed a community service class with the aim of showing how local community service can have a global impact. Founded by John and Jagger Koerner, 52 Kids works to advance sustainable progress and enterprise in the Kamuli district of Uganda, teaching children to live positively without aid.

With the help of Adriana and Shelburne Community School faculty member Bob Gurwicz, Camille organized three visits with Gurwicz's fifth grade class. VCS students worked in small groups with the fifth graders and led hands-on activities to teach them about life in Uganda. "I brought plastic miniature farm animals and baggies of Ugandan crops including corn and coffee beans. I wanted to put the students in Ugandan shoes to teach how to balance a farm... (we) became role models and showed that

it was cool to be a global citizen. They loved our projects so much because it changed their world view," Camille explains.

We are happy to announce that Camille has been honored for her volunteer service with a Certificate of Excellence from the Prudential Spirit of Community Awards and the President's Volunteer Service Award granted by the program on behalf of President Barack Obama! This award honors young people across America for outstanding volunteer service and are granted to the top ten percent of applicants in each state. The President's Volunteer Service Award recognizes Americans of all ages who have volunteered significant amounts of their time to serve their communities and their country.

"Community service fosters my drive to think globally and serve locally," says Camille—she plans on continuing to teach at Shelburne Community School and expanding the program to more schools.

Tess Ruddy to Compete in Championship Swim Meet

7th Grader Tess Ruddy will be competing in the Adirondack League Gold's Short Course Championship Swim Meet this weekend, at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY. Swimmers from all over New England must qualify for events by obtaining times at or below the Gold's Championship cut-off time standard. Tess will be swimming in 6 events over the course of the weekend. We wish her good luck at the Championship!

Second Evening of Readings

March 17th, 6pm

The final Evening of Readings will take place this Tuesday, March 17th, from 6-8pm. Students whose last names fall in the latter half of the alphabet will read from their written work and share their talents with the community. We invite everyone to join us! Please take a moment to review our [Uncommon publication from 2014](#), as it provides samples of some the work produced by our students.

From the College Counseling Office

Sarah Soule

A reminder to all Juniors & Sophomores (and Parents):

Vermont Student Assistance Corporation is hosting College Pathways on Saturday, March 21, 2015 at St. Michael's College. To register, go to www.vsac.org. The event is free! There will be workshops on the college search, the admission process, applying to highly selective colleges,

writing application essays, support services for students with learning differences, standardized testing, and financial aid. There will also be information on the new SAT which will be very helpful for our sophomores, the first group of students who will take the test! I encourage all of our juniors, sophomores, and their parents to attend this very worthwhile program.



Click [HERE](#) to Order
Your Yearbook!



Goff Wins NSF Grant for Students to Study Chagas Disease

Mary Hamilton

Kissing Bugs, Central America, Chagas Disease, Climate Change and the National Science Foundation... What do all of these have in "Commons"? Just ask Peter Goff, Chair of the VCS Science Department and Grant Writer Extraordinaire!

The Kissing Bug is named such not because of romantic tendencies, but rather because it loves to bite the lips of its human hosts. When doing its nocturnal-human-kissing-thing it is also spreading Chagas disease, a nasty illness endemic to parts of Central America and, yes, working its way north due to climate change. This disease wreaks havoc on its human hosts' hearts and digestive tracts ultimately killing them. It is the cause of 40% of infant mortality in Central America.

Peter has just heard that he has been awarded a National Science Foundation grant (not an easy grant to land) to allow himself and 2-3 Vermont Commons students to work with 2 research scientists from UVM on the 5 year study "Modeling

Disease Transmission Using Spatial Mapping of Vector-Parasite Genetics and Vector Feeding Patterns."

In other words, they will spend two weeks in Dr. Rizzo's and Stevens' labs learning advanced STELLA modeling methods and molecular genetic techniques. At the end, they will give

a presentation to the research team describing their plans for modeling the genetics and bug distribution. They will then attend an International Infectious Disease Conference and present their findings to college students, post-docs, physicians and world renowned scientists.

In addition, there may be opportunities during the next school

year to continue to present on their work. For this the students will be paid a stipend and all travel expenses will be covered.

Peter presented the opportunity to students at Morning Meeting and is taking applicants from 9th-11th grades. Drs. Rizzo and Stevens will make the final selections.



VERMONT COMMONS SCHOOL - 75 GREEN MOUNTAIN DRIVE, SOUTH BURLINGTON, VT 05403
P: 802-865-8084 F: 802-865-2429 EMAIL: INFO@VERMONTCOMMONS.ORG

WWW.VERMONTCOMMONS.ORG

ENGAGING STUDENTS WITH THE WORLD