



MARCH 17TH, 2014

TURTLE TRACKS

A WEEKLY EMAIL NEWSLETTER FOR THE VERMONT COMMONS SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Upcoming Events

March 18th
Evening of Readings, Pt. 2

March 21st
End of 3rd Quarter/
Skating at Cairns Arena

March 28th
Trustees' Day

March 28th-30th
Dartmouth Model U.N.

Big Trips 2015

We're pleased to announce the 3 Big Trips we plan to offer for next year. Our "Big Trip" program is a key way in which we endeavor to fulfill the global component of our mission. On these trips, students will be able to strengthen bonds with our sister schools in China, cavort with wolves in Yellowstone, and experience Shakespeare's plays as they were meant to be performed. We know that these trips are expensive and entail a great deal of effort and sacrifice on the parts of parents, students, and teachers, but we believe that they are worth every bit of it. I can't tell you how many times I've heard students wishing that they were going to Sundance/Belize/whatever trip we're offering, and ruing the fact that they had not taken the time to apply. If you have any interest whatsoever, you should be applying. You can always decide not to participate later, but you can't apply later.

Answers to a few common questions: Yes, you can apply to more than one trip. Simply indicate your order of preference. If you are not accepted to your first choice, you will automatically be considered for your second. Yes, it is possible (although rare) to participate in more than one trip but only if by doing so you are not precluding someone else from participating in any trip.

How competitive is the application process? It all depends on how many students want to go on the trip that you're most interested in. We usually won't take more than 12 students on one of these trips.

If you do end up on one of these trips, please remember that the main reason we announce these so far ahead of time is so that you - the student - can make some decisions about your priorities. This summer is your best opportunity to earn some or all of the cost of the trip. So, look at these trips, talk to your parents, and apply!

The application can be found [here](#) and will be available in hard copy at the front desk.

Timeline

Big trips announced – By March 17

Application period – begins March 17

Applications due – April 4

Groups announced – By May 2

Big Trip: China

Ben Wang and Jasmine Walker will be leading a student trip to China during Spring Encounter Week in May 2015. The itinerary will include Beijing, the Great Wall, Shanghai, and a few days with VCS's new sister schools in Zhejiang Province. Here is a link to the trip trailer that was shown at Morning Meeting this week.

Willie Strausser, Class of 2012, went to China with VCS in 2011 and had this to share: "Simply immersing yourself in a society so different from your own is an eye-opening experience that I think everyone should have. What has stuck with me most are the memories of the people I met and interacted with. That's something you can never learn in a classroom and why a trip like this is such a valuable experience."

This trip is open to next year's 9th-12th graders. Estimated cost is \$2700-\$3200, including international airfare.

Check out the video preview [here!](#)



Big Trip: England

Spend a week exploring the literature and history of England! This trip will take us to London and to Stratford-upon-Avon to see two plays of William Shakespeare, performed by the Globe Theatre Company and the Royal Shakespeare Company. In addition to seeing the plays, students will get behind-the-scenes looks into how the companies put productions together through interactive tours of the theaters and discussions with the design crews.

Students will also visit some of London's and Stratford's historical sites, and take excursions to Oxford and the ruins of Stonehenge. This trip will require you to read the plays we will be seeing ahead of the trip, so that you will best be able to understand and enjoy the productions. It is open to students in 9th through 12th grade. Cost: \$2800-\$3000.

Check out the Royal Shakespeare Company's YouTube page [here!](#)



Big Trip: Yellowstone

Yellowstone - 2015

Calling all current 7th through 11th-grade wildlife trackers, biologists, artists, geologists, environmentalists, naturalists...

Wait! That's pretty much everyone at VCS!!!!

By the early 1900's, the native wolf population had been effectively eradicated from the lower 48 states. About 20 years ago, after decades of political debate and controversy, 41 wolves from Canada were reintroduced into Yellowstone National Park. Since then, Wyoming's landscape has been transformed by a cascade of ecological recovery. Join Jessica and Bradley on this Encounter Week to explore a "crown jewel" of our National Park System and witness how wolves have triggered the restoration of the Greater Yellowstone Area. We will travel with our own Yellowstone biologist to guide us on daily adventures in the park and to answer all of our questions. In addition to tracking wolves and (most likely) seeing them in action, we will track and view other denizens of the park such as bison, mountain goats and elk, and we will even take a winter swim in warm water springs (in January!)

- > Dates: January 18 - 23, 2015
- > Open to current 7th through 11th graders
- > Cost approximately \$1800-\$2000.



VCS Announces New Head of School

The Board of Trustees of the Vermont Commons School is pleased to announce the appointment of Dexter Mahaffey, Ph.D as Vermont Commons School's fifth Head of School, effective July 1st, 2014.

Dexter joins us with over twenty years in education during which time he has taught, led, coached, administered, and published extensively. Dexter currently serves as Director of Diversity and Global Studies at Kentucky Country Day School in Louisville.

In Dexter's current role he has primarily worked to recruit and retain a student body from broad cultural, socio-economic and religious backgrounds. Dexter's community-driven work impressed and inspired many in the VCS community who met him.

His collaboration with students, parents, faculty, fellow administrators, and broader community partners helped establish initiatives, policies, and programs that enabled his school to envision and situate itself as a 21st-century learning community.

Having also established long-term exchanges with sister schools in Argentina, France, Ghana, and Haiti, Dexter regularly leads trips and oversees the visits of student groups. In support of these programs, Dexter has led several successful philanthropic efforts internally and externally, making use of grants, capital campaigns, and grassroots undertakings.

A 1993 graduate of Middlebury College with a degree in sociology and anthropology, Dexter subsequently completed his Masters in English from the Bread Loaf School of English in 1998 and earned his Doctorate from the University of Louisville in 2013 with a dissertation exploring historical rhetoric about Africa.

A running and fly fishing enthusiast, Dexter is married to Era MacDonald, a landscape designer and educator specializing in native plants. Their two young sons, Iain and Kai, join them in family pursuits of music, agriculture, fostering animals, and a love of the outdoors.

The Board of Trustees would like to thank everyone who contributed to the extensive search process and to thank all of the search committee members and all of the support group members. We would especially like to thank Tina Mueller, chair of the search committee, and Chuck Burdick of Carney Sandoe.

We could not have hoped for a better group of people to conduct this search.

Excerpted from Letter to the Vermont Commons Community by Brian Leffler, Chair of the Vermont Commons School Board of Trustees



An Invitation from the Schoolhouse

JOIN SPECTRUM'S SLEEP-OUT by doing a STUDENT SLEEP-OUT at the Schoolhouse Learning Center!

Spectrum's Sleep-out is an annual event to raise awareness about issues surrounding homelessness (especially homeless youth) and benefit Spectrum Youth and Family Services.

WHEN: 6:30 PM March 28th - 8 AM March 29th

We will be sleeping out on the Schoolhouse grounds (with the gym as a back-up shelter space) to raise awareness about youth homelessness.

This is a family event- all parents must be in charge of their own kids.

The Schoolhouse is NOT providing meals or coffee at the event. However there will be a treats sign-up for families who would like to bring something tasty to share!

There will be a donation box for Spectrum Youth Services at the event, and if kids would like to get friends, family, and neighbors to sponsor them to sleepout to support homeless youth, they are encouraged to do so. Donations to Spectrum can also be made at the Schoolhouse's Sleep-out webpage where you can register as a member of our team!

The Plan for the evening:

6:30 PM arrive, set up tarps, tents, sleep gear

7 PM-8 PM: activities

8 PM: storytelling

9 PM: BED TIME.

Morning time: wake up and go on your merry way!

Please bring everything your family needs to sleep outside in the early spring weather! (i.e. tent, sleeping gear, tarp for the ground, etc.)

If you are planning to attend please email Emily Johnson at johnson.emilyp@gmail.com.

"Out of the Blue" Returns to VCS

Vermont Commons was fortunate to host the a cappella singing group, Out of the Blue, from Yale University. They were scheduled to perform for us during Common Hour on March 12th, but the weather caused two snow days and school closure. Fortunately the singing group was still in Burlington on Friday, the 14th, when they joined us and sang for individual classes first period and then performed two songs during Morning Meeting for the entire VCS community. It was the second time Out of the Blue has visited Vermont Commons, the first time being two years ago. They promise to return again!



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