



APRIL 17TH, 2014

TURTLE TRACKS

A WEEKLY EMAIL NEWSLETTER FOR THE VERMONT COMMONS SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Upcoming
Events

April 18th-27th
VCS Closed for
April Break

May 1st
VCS Gala Event
at 6:30pm

May 2nd
10th Grade
Sponsored Social

May 3rd
SATs

The School I Learn In

Vermont Commons School is a remarkable and very special place. That was clear, once again, last week when we screened documentary film “The House I Live In” and engaged with a panel of learned, passionate and compassionate spokespeople from all sides of the issue of justice as relating to drugs and incarceration in the United States. Nearly 120 people, both of our school and from the wider community, attended to learn about, and wrestle with, the challenges around the “war on drugs”.

We want to thank those who sat on the panel for their time and their thoughtful input. Most especially, we’d like to thank Anthony Johnson, film participant and parolee for the openness and honesty with which he fielded questions about his life, his choices and their consequences. Anthony spent Thursday morning with the students at morning meeting and then attending the senior memoir class and the 7th grade Vermont history class. His straightforward answers to difficult and, at times, quite personal questions afforded the students a glimpse into a life lived in very different circumstances, but one we all know as adults, is possible for any of us given the right (or wrong) circumstances.

Thank you to everyone involved in the organization of this production, from Susan Randall, whose brain-child it was, to Natalie Senior who “personed” the welcome table, from Derrick Senior and Margo Bartsch who spearheaded the marketing plan, to Charlotte Street Films who waived their fees and did their utmost in finagling to enable film director, Eugene Jarecki to be present. And thank you to ALL those in between, too numerous to list here. Last Wednesday evening Vermont Commons School was truly engaged with the world.



VCS Juniors Selected for National Merit Scholarship Competition



Congratulations to three of our juniors, Mikhal, Adrian, and Eli. They've met the requirements to enter the National Merit Scholarship competition! Of 1.5 million students, nationwide, they were three of 50,000 of the highest-scoring students from across the country to qualify. We're very proud of them!

News from Chinese III

by Jieru Wang

The students finished a cultural comparison project, American Eating vs. Chinese eating. After finished individual research paper and shared it with peers through class presentation. The Chinese group students (Jordan, Jamie, Lauren, and Sophia) held their Chinese style business gathering in Zen's garden. The four students acted as real estate business people who can speak Madarin, and were trying to make a business deal with another four Chinese guests (Anna, Ben, Camille, and Eli).

These Chinese guests had a child who was headed to college soon, and so the parents were looking for a new house close to their kid (so they could spy on him/her). The four real estate agents showed the guests pictures of possible houses close to UVM that they could buy. They were trying to convince the guests that their deal is a fabulous idea and will be worth the purchase. An American style gathering will be take place at Shelburne Farms in May.

Watch the Senior Send-Off on YouTube

A cherished tradition at Vermont Commons School is our Senior Sendoff, where we honor and say goodbye to our Seniors as they prepare to begin their 6-week Senior Projects. Enjoy!

[Click here to watch the video!](#)

Order Your Yearbooks Online!

After collecting, selecting and picking the best pictures of the year, our yearbook was sent to be printed. You don't want to miss it so make sure you claim your copy!

\$55 cash or check (give to Adriana). You can also buy online by clicking the banner below.

Thanks!
Adriana

Order Your **YEARBOOK** 

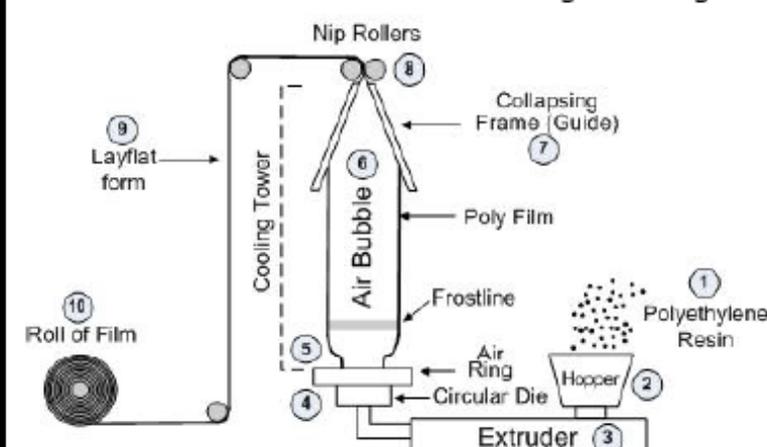
Sustainability Update: Exploring the World of Waste - Part 1

Bradley's R&S Class this semester is called "Cradle to Cradle... Where Does our Stuff Come From? And Where Does it Go?" Together, his eleven students have been taking a close...REALLY close!...look at the solid waste our school produces. One of our first tasks was to don bright yellow rubber gloves, collect and open up bags of trash and recycling, and start measuring how much waste we produce. We have chosen random days throughout the semester to weigh our trash and recycling, as well as sorting, weighing and counting items to answer such questions as...How much recycling are we accidentally throwing into the trash? How much compostable material are we throwing into the trash? How many recyclable plastic bags do we throw away? We will continue to take measurements through the end of the semester, but our current data indicates that we produce about 3,300 lbs (1.65 tons) of trash and about 2000 lbs (1 ton) of recycling every school year. Mixed in with our trash, however, is material that could be recycled (8%) or composted (46%!). Adding these percentages together, we were astonished to realize that we can reduce the amount of trash we produce (which ends up in a landfill in Coventry, VT) by over 50% if we're more careful about not throwing recyclables in the trash and if we start composting the material that can be composted! That's amazing!

The students in Bradley's class have also been engaged in an individual project called "Cradle to Cradle." Each student was assigned a specific recyclable item and asked to trace the entire "life story" of that item. They began by journeying back in time to discover how each item found its way to VCS, from its original chemical components to its manufacturing process to its travels through webs of distributors and retailers and finally to our school. For example, Meika discovered that a plastic Dr. Pepper bottle began its life as a pile of plastic pellets in Akron, OH, and may end its life in the Polartec fleece jacket you're going to get next Christmas from your mom. Jake, while tracing the history of a Price Chopper glass salsa bottle, became trapped in a morass of ConAgra corporate subsidiaries who would not divulge their information about where they get the glass jars from...a lesson in itself about how challenging it can be in our modern economy to know exactly where our stuff comes from! Adrian discovered that plastic shopping bags are manufactured by blowing air through liquid plastic to create a three story tall, one foot diameter bubble that quickly cools into the thin film from which the bags are made. Students are currently working on tracing their items forwards in time to learn the ultimate fate of the common recyclables that we throw into our blue bins every day.

Tune in to the next issue of Turtle Tracks to learn more about our quest to understand VCS's relationship to solid waste!

Blown Film Extrusion Process for Creating Plastic Bags



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