

SEPTEMBER 21, 2015

TURTLE TRACKS

A WEEKLY E-NEWSLETTER FOR THE VERMONT COMMONS SCHOOL COMMUNITY

UPCOMING EVENTS

September 25th

Documentary Film Series
The Mask You Live In

Sept. 28th - Oct. 2nd
Spirit Week

October 2nd
Grandparents' Day &
All-School Bonfire

October 3rd
SATs

INTRODUCING:

The Commons Fund

We're All Connected

by *Mary Hamilton*

Vermont Commons School was named such by the founders to engender the ethos of the "Commons" of old. The Commons was the place in a community that represented shared resources, both natural and cultural -- sometimes grazing land, sometimes the meeting-house where news was shared, decisions for the community were made, and dances were had. The Commons was the foundation of many New England towns.

At Vermont Commons School, our shared resources include knowledge, love of learning, respect and compassion for each other, along with a passionate, knowledgeable and professional faculty; our building and green space, our Frisbees and volleyballs; our buses that transport our students out into the world, and the multi-age conversations we have in the lunch room, on walking PE and Encounter Weeks.

For all of these reasons the Vermont Commons Advancement Office has changed the name of our historic Annual Fund to "The Commons Fund". While this may appear to be a mere change in language, we know that language plays an important role in how we think.

The Commons Fund provides funding for the programs and people that make Vermont Commons School different: Encounter Weeks, Research and Service, our incredible faculty. Were we to charge enough tuition to cover all of our operational costs, we would charge ourselves right out of the market. So we ask our families, friends, local businesses for donations, we apply for grants, and we fundraise.

Like the Commons of old, The Commons Fund is a shared resource for all of our community members. If

the Fund allows a faculty member to attend a conference, the bar is raised for teaching and learning across the board. If the Fund allows a promising prospective student to attend Vermont Commons School, the entire community is affected with everything that student and his or her family bring to the community.

The Commons Fund performs a vital role in allowing Vermont Commons School to be the rigorous, engaging and compassionate school you want your child to attend.

We welcome and thank Staci and Seth Lasker for being the first ever Chairs of The Commons Fund! Please join them, the faculty and the administration in contributing to The Commons Fund and rest assured that your gift will positively impact every member of our community.



National Honor Society Begins Community Service Efforts

by Camille Bartsch

National Honor Society members and Vermont Commons Students joined 27 teams for the Make-A-Wish Walk at Shelburne Museum on Sunday, September 13. Our team fundraised \$370 contributing to the total of over \$51,000 to grant wishes to children with life threatening illnesses.

This walk kicks off a year of activities planned by NHS to extend community service beyond our community. Our next scheduled event is in conjunction with the VCS Cross Country team to participate in the second annual Sarah Ramsey Strong 5k Run along the Burlington Waterfront on Saturday, October 3 at 2pm. Fundraising efforts support international scholarship at Champlain College, where scholarship is a pillar in the NHS mission. The event is open to everyone in the VCS community. Please contact Camille Bartsch (cbartsch@vermontcommons.org) to be included in our VCS team.



Event Reminder
The Mask You Live In

Don't forget that our Documentary Film Series kicks off this Friday, September 25th, with *The Mask You Live In*, an examination of American masculinity and its possibly harmful effects on men, boys, and society-at-large.

The screening will begin at 6pm in the Commons Room. Food will be served starting at 5:30pm for \$6/person. This event is **free and open to the public** - please invite your friends & family!

Assessment Periods at Vermont Commons

by Jasmine Walker

Beginning last year and throughout this year one of the primary focuses of faculty-wide Professional Development is on Assessment. Over the summer, faculty read cutting-edge research articles and engaged in conversations about best practices. Through this dialogue, the Department Chairs Committee elected to move to one exam period per year rather than two. After realizing that we were spending fifteen school days preparing for and administering exams, we explored other models. Many college departments and instructors require culminating projects, presentations, or term papers in lieu of final examinations. In order to reflect--and prepare our students effectively for--these trends in education, and to allow more time to focus on engaging with content, mid-year exams are now at the discretion of teachers and departments: in disciplines in which large tests are common due to the cumulative nature of the skills in the subject matter (math and science primarily), students may still take a semester exam.

The end-of-year exams will be similar to those in past years, with one exam given per day in June. However, 6th graders will not take exams, and seventh and eighth graders will continue to see a combination of different forms of assessments, as they have in past years. Please let us know if you have any questions!

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