

April 4, 2012

# TURTLE TRACKS

A WEEKLY EMAIL NEWSLETTER FOR THE VERMONT COMMONS SCHOOL COMMUNITY

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**April 13**

Last day for  
Seniors!

**April 17-18**

School Play  
West Side Story

**April 19**

PACS Coffee Hour  
7:45-8:45 AM

**April 20-27**

April Vacation

## VCS Students Perform West Side Story April 17-18

Vermont Commons School presents *West Side Story* – 7pm April 17th and 18th at the Black Box Theater, Main Street Landing in Burlington. For more information, contact Ben Patrick at [bpatrik@vermontcommons.org](mailto:bpatrik@vermontcommons.org).

## Chinese Acrobats at VCS—Thursday 4/19 2:30-3:15 PM



The Vermont Commons School will offer a rare opportunity for students to be part of an intimate performance of Chinese acrobats. In addition to expressing millenia of Chinese culture through their breathtaking feats, the four performers will discuss culture, customs, and school life through an interpreter. For many Americans, acrobatics provides a compelling and memorable introduction to Chinese culture, leading to further interest in the Chinese martial arts, history, philosophy, and language. Join us for an adrenaline-filled afternoon that will expand your horizons!

## Reminder: Big Trips Applications Due Friday 4/6

Please hand in all completed Trips [Applications](#) to Chance by Friday! Also, Ben Wang and Jennifer Cohen wanted to share the [China Trip 2013 trailer](#) that was shown during Morning Meeting.

## Middlebury College Relay For Life Community Service Opportunity—Saturday 5/4 –by Candis Kjelleren

Contribute to the VCS Community Engagement mission in this cause to fight cancer! Create your own personal fitness and fundraising goal in advance. Set up your tent. Stake out a place for our Flying Turtles team to gather. Carry the VCS banner in the opening parade. Wear a funky costume. Walk and run at different times over a twelve hour period. Enjoy catered food, games, and entertainment. Light a candle to honor a loved one who is fighting cancer or who has lost the battle. Stand on the sidelines and cheer on the cancer survivors who walk in the opening lap. Assist Middlebury College student volunteers with event logistics.

Some may wish to camp through the night. Others may wish to come for the opening ceremonies at 6:00 p.m. and stay through the luminaria ceremony, which begins at dusk. Rallying parents and students to participate in what will be an amazing evening for many reasons. Please signal interest by sending an e-mail ASAP to: [candiskjelleren@gmail.com](mailto:candiskjelleren@gmail.com)

## Board Corner: Faculty Trustee, Peter Goff



When asked, Pete Goff would say his place is “in the classroom, on the court, and on the trail.” He has never pursued administrative roles (“run away, screaming...might be a better description!”) but five years ago, when asked to step onto the Board as the first faculty liaison, he said yes. “Our Board does very important work, and it is vital to the health of our community. The reason I was happy to sign up for my second three-year term was that it’s a high-functioning, efficient, and downright fun group of people to work with. It’s a constant and welcome reminder to me that there are people in our community who aren’t here every day, who truly value this place.”

VCS Board Chair, Rebecca Lindy Coll says the value that Pete Goff brings to the Board is immeasurable. “Not only does Pete carry with him a deep and comprehensive institutional history, but his passion and dedication to the school show through in everything he does. Pete is incredibly smart, thoughtful in his contributions, and intensely committed to the future of Vermont Commons School.”

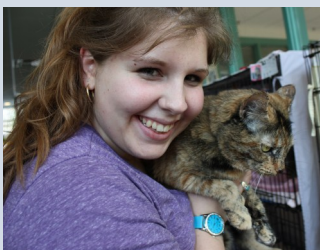
In his role as Faculty Trustee, Pete serves on the Commons Campus Committee (of the Strategic Plan) and the Committee on Trustees, which serves to not only recruit new Trustees but to assess the professional development of our current Trustees as well. A quote from a retreat a couple of years ago has always stuck with him; ‘*The Board safeguards the mission, the faculty give life to the mission, and the students live the mission.*’ As a Board Member, a faculty member, and occasional student (“watching my fellow faculty work is just plain fun”), Pete gets the benefits of all three aspects of that quote. He observes that “the mission pushes us to constantly ask questions about ourselves and our role in our community/ecosystem...it’s a constantly evolving system.”

Pete Goff was VCS’s first science teacher fifteen years ago, and as the first and current Chair he was able to develop the departmental matrix and mission with the help of his wife, Donna Rizzo, and former VCS teacher, Hans Manske. Pete was also the Athletic Director and Program Director of the Research & Service program for the first decade of VCS’ history. In addition to the fact that at VCS we all value life-long learning in and out of the classroom, the fact that the VCS educational community is based more on shared expectations than rules and regulations is one of the things Pete likes most about our school. “Our students respect themselves as learners and our faculty are passionate about their subjects. The result of this is a fantastic learning environment.”

Originally from Limerick, Maine, Pete taught for six years during his graduate career (at UVM and Vanderbilt University) while coaching high school swim teams. He came back to Vermont from Vandy to write his dissertation and was hooked into VCS by his wife’s lab partner in John Todd’s EcoMachine class (“some guy named Rob Skiff...”). He’s been at VCS ever since and touts “I simply love my job.” In addition to his work at VCS, Pete enjoys traveling with his wife and father, wood-carving, critters in general, American Idol, the New England Patriots, and Volleyball.

## Community Engagement at the Humane Society

–by Katiya Boudette and Mia Jager



Over the past several months we have been volunteering at the Humane Society of Chittenden County. The Humane Society is filled with animals from Guinea pigs to German Shepherds, but our main focus is with the cats. We do a job called cat socializing which is where we take the cats that do not get along well with other cats, and play and interact with them so that they get the full attention that they need. In addition, we go into cat rooms, where the cats that do get along with other cats live, and we interact with them. We have developed strong attachments to these animals and it is always bittersweet when one of our favorites is adopted.

We want them to have a home, but we miss playing and petting them. It’s incredibly hard to leave them and we find ourselves wanting to take them all home with us. The Humane Society is a great place to volunteer and spend time with animals doing every aspect of animal care.

# VCS Delegates Represent at Dartmouth Model UN

–by Mark Cline Lucey



This past weekend, Vermont Commons School sent its biggest delegation ever to the Dartmouth Model United Nations conference. Dartmouth allows a maximum of 25 students per school and that is exactly the number we had (minus two who were too sick to join us). I spoke with Faculty Advisors from large high schools who could barely manage to pull together a delegation of ten students, while we had thirty interested students from a 9-12 grade population of fifty-eight students! The fact that over half our students are excited to spend an entire weekend (over thirteen hours!) deliberating over global problems says it all to me about the magic that exists at VCS.



For anyone unfamiliar with Model UN, hundreds of high school students gather to act as delegates of countries around the world and serve on committees modeled on actual United Nations committees/agencies/organizations. They spend the weekend discussing, debating, finding common ground, and seeking to write and pass resolutions to resolve actual global challenges. Learn more at <http://www.unausa.org/modelun>.



As for our students, represented Iceland, Bangladesh, Kenya and Bahrain on a variety of committees. The student names and committees are too numerous to list here, but the topics they tackled included nuclear energy and disarmament, trade barriers, the growth of 3rd world urban slums, China's intellectual property rights infractions, small arms proliferation, weaponization of outer space, tuberculosis in Russia, natal health in the 3rd world, Israeli-Palestinian control of Jerusalem, and what to do about the conflict in Syria! I can hardly describe the joy it brings to a Social Studies teacher like me to watch my students enthusiastic and engaged with real-world issues for an entire weekend. I believe it speaks directly to our mission of global immersion and engagement with the world.



Watching the VCS students speak their minds in committee caucuses, observing them cooperating and collaborating with other delegates, hearing the complex and thoughtful conclusions they arrived at, and listening to them continue their discussions long after the committee meetings let out gave me shivers. There IS hope for the future with young people like this!



I want to acknowledge three of our seniors, Sandra Ackert-Smith, Joey Carrara, and Nate Jaffe who have attended all three of the Dartmouth conferences and have been exceptional leaders and recruiters. Through their own enthusiasm for the experience, they have inspired the majority of VCS students to want to attend as well. They will be missed next year, as will our other seniors, Adam Coll, Christian Frey, Eliot Crawford, Sarah Mueller, Josh Minot, Phineas Schlossberg, and Tim Sears.



I also want to extend a huge thank you to parent Paul Lamberson who helped me "herd cats" for the weekend. Paul drove one of the buses, sat in on numerous hours of committee meetings, and even drove students to the store for a late-night snack run. Thank you Paul!

## College Corner –by Sarah Soule



On Monday, April 2nd, Liz and Sarah took the Class of 2013 to Champlain Valley Union High School in Hinesburg to attend a fair where over 100 colleges and universities were in attendance. Our students met with representatives and were able to gather information and ask questions about higher education as they begin to contemplate life after VCS.

To assist in the process, Vermont Commons utilizes Naviance, an online college counseling program. Naviance is regarded by guidance and college counselors across the United States and Canada as the premier program for accessing college information. Naviance is an extraordinary tool which is a web based program that focuses on each of the components of the college counseling process. Naviance connects students, parents, the college counselor and registrar to higher educational institutions all across the country and Canada. Naviance provides the tools for students to request and process transcripts and letters of recommendation. Naviance provides a very thorough search engine and allows students to do an in depth exploration of colleges and universities to over 4300 institutions! Most notably is Naviance's "scattergram" program which is an invaluable tool. The scattergrams track admissions decisions for each VCS graduate since 2005 at individual colleges and universities. A current junior or senior can look up a specific institution and plot their personal GPA and standardized test scores. Doing so helps to determine whether or not they might be considered a potential candidate at a given college based on previous admission decisions of their VCS peers. Additionally, Naviance has greatly enhanced the efficiency of the college admissions process in that Vermont Commons is able to share information on college visits and share links to relevant higher education websites to share with our students.

## Local Showing of Emmy Nominee Filmmaker's New Film About Student with ADHD



For those of you familiar with Daniel Habib's film about his family's journey of inclusion and his son with autism called, *Including Samuel*, he will be in Burlington to show his new film, *Who Cares About Kelsey* on April 11th. Kelsey is a high school student with ADHD who carries the scars of being misunderstood and unsupported and is at risk of not graduating. When a new principal enters her school and institutes a whole school change in climate and behavior management, life changes dramatically for Kelsey.

The film is being shown at the Hilton in Burlington on April 11th from 3:30-5:00 p.m. as part of the Vermont Family Network's Annual Meeting. VFN is a statewide children's agency supporting families whose children have health, disability or education needs and serves over 6,000 families each year. The film is free but you need to register:

<http://www.vermontfamilynetwork.org/2011/11/vfns-spring-conference/>

If you have questions, feel free to contact Pamela Kraynak, parent of VCS junior Jonah and Chair of VFN's Board at 859-9633.

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