

November 7, 2012

TURTLE TRACKS

A WEEKLY EMAIL NEWSLETTER FOR THE VERMONT COMMONS SCHOOL COMMUNITY

UPCOMING EVENTS

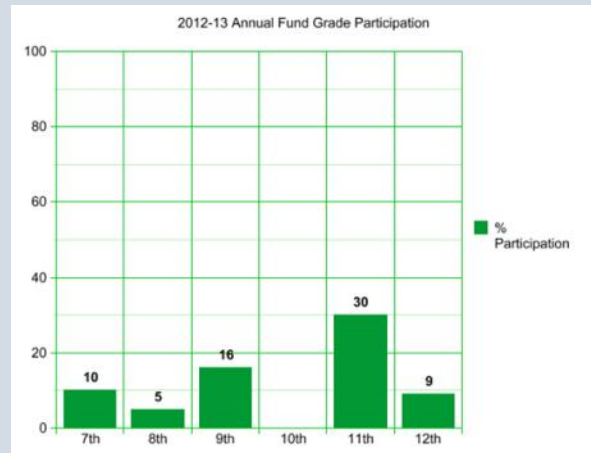
November 8	November 9	November 15	November 19-23	November 28
10th & 11th Grade Potluck 6-8 PM	Coffee House at VCS 6-9 PM	PACS Sponsored Coffee Hour 7:45-8:45 AM	Thanksgiving Vacation	Noon Dismissal

Annual Fund Update!

And they're off! The race is on for our annual fund goal of 100% participation and right now the Junior Class has leapt out of the starting blocks with 30% participation. But, **remember**, this is a race where we all need to cross the finish line to win!

We're so grateful for **every** Annual Fund gift we receive but to those of you who can manage a lead donor gift we want to extend a special thanks. It's truly remarkable to see how many of you are willing to give so much to our school. Please consider a Lead Donor gift!

Thank you! -Jeff Govoni, 2012-13 Annual Fund Chair



Driver's Education at VCS



Vermont Commons School is looking to host a certified Driver's Education Course starting in late November. In order to secure this program at VCS, we need at least four participants. The cost will depend on the number of students. This course will take place after school (around 4 PM) twice a week potentially on Wednesdays and Thursdays. The duration of the course is 12 weeks and will amount to 50 hours of class time. Please contact Liz Peck with any questions or to make a commitment.

Canoeing E-Week Video!



The Adirondack Canoe Encounter Week made good use of the school's new GoPro video camera!

Check out our action video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6IK-ytyE0QY>

Thanks! -Mark

Admissions Update –by Sarah Soule



Vermont Commons hosted a very successful Open Hfor prospective students and their parents on Sunday, November 4th at the school. We had well over 80 people in attendance, and our guests were greeted by current students, members of the faculty, staff, and administration at an informational program. Miles Lamberson and Amira Silverman were our student presenters, and David Howe, father of Lauren, spoke from the parental perspective. Lex Jackson, VCS '12, was a surprise guest speaker, and she described how her six years at our school prepared her for enrollment at Colby College in Maine. The majority of the families who attended said that they first learned of our school through "word of mouth" and, to a name, could reference a current family who had recommended our school. On behalf of all of us, we thank our parents and students for referring friends and neighbors as they consider Vermont Commons as an educational option.

Wellness Weekly –by Simona Shironi

The Wellness Committee has recently teamed with the Senior Leadership Program to explore ways to facilitate meaningful conversations among students about Wellness topics. The collaboration between these two programs that takes place during Common Hour, allows us to double the time allotted to Wellness education while providing the seniors with basic facilitation skills and experience that is likely to serve them in the future. We decided to use peer–education as a tool because research indicated that this method is among the most effective ways to reach teens and college students to address such topics as body image and self-esteem, healthy relationships, and stress.

The first meeting was held on October 24th and was devoted to the topic of body image and self-esteem. We began the session with a short clip from a recent award winning documentary titled “Teen Truth: An Inside Look at Body Image.” Following the clip, students went into their leadership groups to address some of the issues raised. While some seniors chose to divide into smaller groups by gender, others opted to discuss the issues in a mixed group. The initial reports from the small groups ranged from enthusiastic participation to awkward silence. As a result, we felt that it was important to continue the conversation about body image and self-esteem the following week. In addition, because students seemed stressed out at the end of the quarter, we decided to introduce the topic of stress as well. The October 29th session began with a roundtable, featuring five seniors who shared briefly their experiences with issues related to body image, self-esteem, and stress. Following the roundtable, students in their leadership groups discussed the issues and came up with creative ideas and solutions. At the conclusion of the session, we came together as a community to listen to the various suggestions articulated in the small groups.

The most recent survey sent to students reflects general satisfaction with the peer education model. We are currently planning two additional sessions for December 12 and December 19. Additionally, we are looking for grants to support this project.



College Corner –by Sarah Soule



As parents and students look ahead to the looming costs of higher education, I encourage you to consider attending VSAC's Paying for College Presentation to be held next week. There are two being held in our local area: Wednesday, November 14th at Burlington High School and Thursday, November 15th at South Burlington HS. Topics include: How to pay for college, what sort of aid might be available to you, what forms you need to complete and when, and how to compare college costs. It's not too early for sophomore and junior parents and students to consider attending. Please call VSAC for further details and to register! [802-655-9602](tel:802-655-9602).

VCS Chinese Students Head to Montreal! –by Ben Wang

VCS Students in Chinese II, III, and IV undertook an adventure in Chinese culture and language on Thursday, November 1st, two days later than planned due to Superstorm Sandy. We traveled to Chinatown in Montréal and stuffed ourselves with dim sum in the morning. What is dim sum? Here's Freshman Sophia Webb: "I learned that the dim sum restaurant is very chaotic and noisy, and that you don't have a menu; the waiters just walk around with carts and ask if you want the dishes on their cart." Eli Hinds said, "It was fun to try new foods like squid and [the] coconut jello cake thing." Camille agreed: "We were all so happy and enjoying all the new authentic food. This lunch experience was a great and we enjoyed trying all the new foods."

The students then divided up into competing groups and fanned out into Chinatown for a Chinese characters and shopping scavenger hunt. The teachers, Jieru Wang and Ben Wang, shouted out a list of items that the students had to purchase in Chinese but did not translate or explain what the items were. The groups had to interact with Chinese speakers in order to successfully make the purchases. They came through with flying colors. Junior Amber Quinlan said, "Most of the time we went into a store to ask and everyone that we asked wanted to help. Someone even went out of their way to show us where the newspapers were. I think that this was an important part of the day because of the interactions that we had with people." Seth Evans-Diffenderfer said, "It was cool to see that people could actually for the most part understand our Chinese!"

We then piled back onto the VCS bus and parent chaperone John Mantegna's car and drove to the Botanical Gardens just in time for the guided tour of the largest Chinese garden in the Western Hemisphere. We heard about and discussed Chinese garden design, architecture, and we checked out penjing (Chinese version of bonsai). Seth: "I really enjoyed the Chinese garden; the atmosphere was fantastic."

We then took a break from immersion in all things Chinese and stopped by the Insectarium where many of us had a giant walking stick insect climb up our forearms (under a staff person's care, of course). After that we wandered into the new Biodiversity Center and spent some relaxing downtime lying on beanbags gazing up at a giant mobile of discarded bottle caps. We were then whisked into an auditorium by an enthusiastic researcher and given a presentation about Base Camp, an ambitious global environmental education mission.

After a quick boxed dinner at the Garden Restaurant we returned to the Chinese Gardens for the 20th anniversary of the *Magic of Lanterns* festival, including another guided tour.

Sophia again: "The lantern festival and Chinese garden were beautiful and I feel like it gave me a deeper understanding of Chinese culture. Overall, the trip was fantastic and eye-opening and a blast, and it encouraged me to continue to learn more and more Chinese!" Anna Leffler summed it up: "It was a great experience and I would love to do it again!"

Please enjoy the pictures on the following page. Credits go to Anna Leffler, Jieru Wang, Jordan Cannon, and Ben Wang.



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