

December 5, 2012

TURTLE TRACKS

A WEEKLY EMAIL NEWSLETTER FOR THE VERMONT COMMONS SCHOOL COMMUNITY

UPCOMING EVENTS

December 8	December 9	December 13	December 15	December 20
Artisan Craft Fair 10-4 PM at VCS	Barnes & Noble Fundraiser	PACS Coffee Hour 7:45 AM-8:45 AM	Winter Formal Dance at Maglianero's	First Day of Winter Vacation

Artisan Fair This Saturday!



Thirty-three vendors, food, music, and community!

ALERT: Contrary to last week's Turtle Tracks, there is NO ENTRY FEE!

Calling all VCS Chefs and Bakers: We need donated food items to sell—chili, cornbread, garlic bread, cookies, cupcakes, drinks, snacks, your imagination is the limit! Please contact Mary at mhamiltonhomer@vermontcommons.org to RSVP your donations. Delivery Saturday morning between 9 and 10 AM.

Rid your house of excess before the holidays: There will be a "Jumble Table" (think Tag Sale) at the Fair. Donate those objects in need of new homes.

The fair will run from 10-4 PM, we hope you can stop by and join in on the fun!

New VCS Apparel



VCS has new school swag for sale. Its debut will be at the **ARTISAN FAIR** on Saturday.

Parents, come get your students' Christmas Spirit Swag!

December Crepe Menu

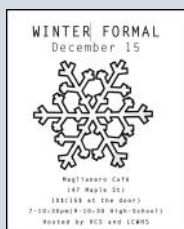
Thursday 12/6 - Ham, Potato, and Cheese with Peanut Butter and Chocolate.

Tuesday 12/11 - BBQ Chicken, Broccoli and Cheese with Sautéed Pears with Honey and Fresh Whipped Cream.

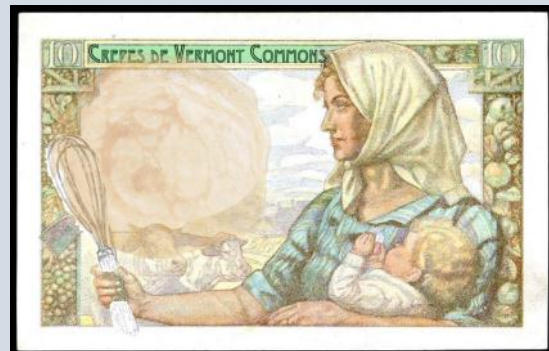
Thursday 12/13 - Egg, Cheese, and Veggies with Berries, Chocolate and Vanilla Ice Cream.

Tuesday 12/18 - Turkey, Cheese, and Spinach with Apples, Raisins, and Fresh Whipped Cream.

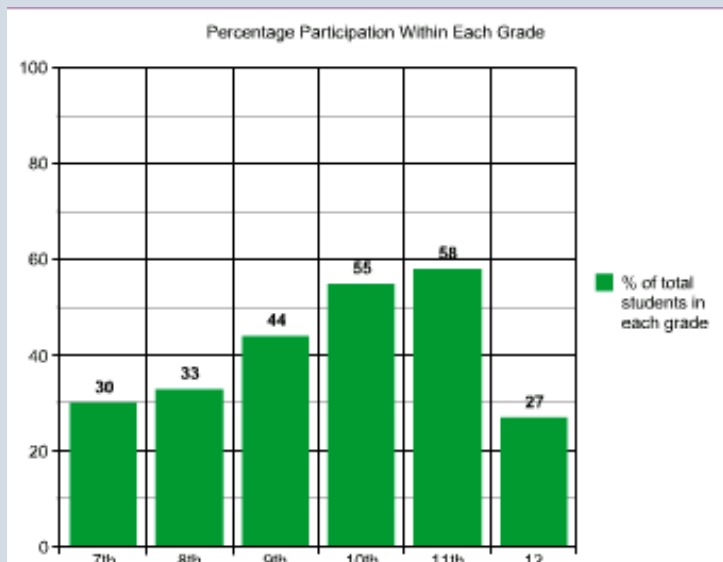
Winter Formal Dance



For dance information including the date, time, and location please [click here](#).



Annual Fund Update



We are ALMOST half way there with **\$26,375.40** cash in hand AND **\$46,122.00** in pledges!

Make your gift or pledge now, increase your class participation (we are going for **100% PARTICIPATION!**), and help this awesome school continue to do what it does best, educate and engage our kids!

-Jeff Govoni, Annual Fund Chair

Welcome to VCS, Luke Donforth! –by Camille Bartsch, ‘16



Some kids graduate after high school, others after college, but not Luke Donforth, “I was in school until 24th grade,” said Luke, the new Chemistry I and II teacher. Luke, originally from Toronto, has loved science from a young age. Throughout high school, Luke was encouraged by many of his teachers. Mr. Nelson, his chemistry teacher, and Mr. Wilmot, his physics teacher, are two teachers he mentions when he discusses why he majored in science throughout his college education. At the University of California at Davis he had two memorable teachers named Dr. Randy Harris and Professor Rena Zieve. “They all enjoyed sharing their love of scientific investigation, and I hope to contribute to that,” Luke said. At UC Davis he earned a degree in Physics and moved on to Cornell University for his Ph.D. He currently teaches as an adjunct professor in the Information Technology & Sciences division at Champlain College.

Now at Vermont Commons School Luke teaches Chemistry I to the ninth grade class and Chemistry II to the 11th graders. He hopes that his students “see and appreciate the scientific phenomenon around them.” Luke is an energetic and thoughtful teacher who believes in hands-on labs and also getting to the fundamental principles of the courses he teaches. “I love how Luke makes class interesting and entertaining, making it fun for us to learn,” said Anna Leffler, a ninth grader in his Chemistry I class. Bella Carrara, an 11th grader in Luke’s Chemistry II class commented, “Our class is almost always hands on experiments with really helpful visuals. And he is hilarious and his beard is cool.”

Gabe Mantegna, a senior in his Chemistry II class, added, “Luke inspired me to learn about the world of chemistry by demonstrating how changes in pressure work. He did a demonstration where he placed a deflated glove inside a chamber, and then sucked the air out of the chamber to make the glove inflate like it was being blown up.” Throughout Luke’s first month teaching at VCS, he has had surprising moments such as the limbo contest his first week here. He hopes his students will not drop units from numbers because that is one of his biggest pet peeves. For all of those in his classes who can drive, beware, he hates rude drivers!

Science and education run in Luke’s family. His brother is a science teacher, his sister works in public health, and his wife is a middle school teacher. Both of Luke’s parents are writers. All of us at VCS are very happy to welcome Luke to the community. Luke is already inspiring students with his love of Science to be curious scholars.

Board Corner: Strategic Plan Implementation

–by Bob Hill, Trustee



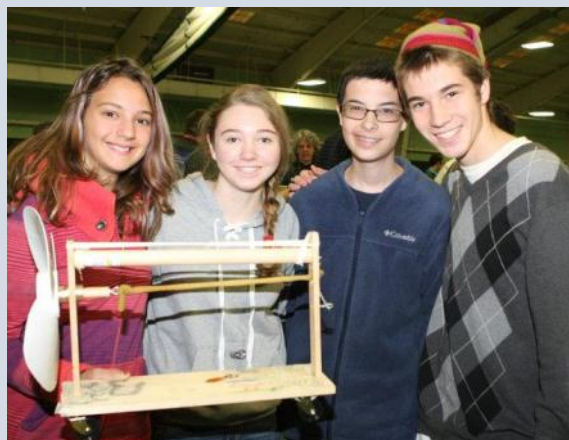
Three years ago, the Board of Vermont Commons adopted our first Strategic Plan. Simply put, strategic planning is an organization's process of defining its strategy, or direction, and how decisions on allocating its resources to pursue this strategy should be made. Our plan is the result of many hours of thoughtful work by a cross-constituency group (including students, faculty, administrators, trustees and community members) dedicated to the long-term success of Vermont Commons School.



For implementation purposes, our plan is divided into four Pillars: Programs, which include academics, health and wellness, and extracurricular activities; Community Connections; Financial Stewardship and School Growth; *and* Commons Campus. Each Pillar is represented by a committee whose charge is to develop and implement an *appropriate* action plan. The chairs of the four Pillars sit on the Strategic Plan Oversight Committee (SPOC). It is the responsibility of SPOC to ensure that actions taken by the Pillars are informed by the Strategic Plan, Mission, Vision, and Guiding Principles of Vermont Commons.

I am passionate about the school and the impact it is having on my two children. The work of the Board, and by extension SPOC, is to ensure the long term health and growth of this unique and engaging school. There are copies of the plan available in Peter Gilmore's office; it is also available on our [website](#).

The Math Club Competes in UVM's TASC –by Gabe Mantegna, '13



The VCS Math Club participated in an engineering competition hosted by UVM called TASC this past Saturday. The students had to design a vehicle that could traverse 30 meters with and without carrying weight, carry weight up an incline, and make it over an obstacle course. The vehicle had to run on human-generated energy, and be powered by something other than a battery. One team, consisting of Gabe Mantegna '13 and Adrian Kelly '15, designed a vehicle powered by wound-up latex tubing. The other team, consisting of Eli Hulse '15, Josh Wolfstein '16, Maxine Senft-Miller '17, and Eliza Jackson '17, designed a vehicle powered by a propeller driven by rubber bands. They had a great time and hope to compete again next year!

Raising Our Ecological Conscious –by Charlotte Rutz, '13

350.org was founded in 2006 right here in Vermont by environmental activist, journalist, and Middlebury professor Bill McKibben. Initially 350.org existed only in our state, but in 2009 McKibben organized what *Foreign Policy* magazine called "the largest global coordinated rally of any kind" with more than 7,000 events in 188 countries. Today, this grassroots movement has spread to even more countries around the globe. The mission of 350.org is to reduce the carbon content in our atmosphere to 350 parts per million or less. Climate scientists tell us that this is necessary to preserve our planet, as we know it. Up until the industrial revolution in the late nineteenth century, the carbon content was 275 to 280 ppm. The increase from 275 ppm to the current 392-ppm has resulted in a 0.8 degree Celsius rise in earth's temperature since 1880.

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To get the word out, 350.org uses online campaigns, grassroots organizing, and mass public actions, led from the bottom up by thousands of volunteer organizers all over the world. The point is to educate people and to convince the people in power to take action. Current and past campaigns and projects range from workshops to demonstrations to large-scale protests. 350.org is responsible for the Obama administration halting the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline in January of this year and organizing recent opposition to that dangerous project. Another effort is a campaign to get colleges and universities to divest from fossil fuels and invest in more socially responsible funds.

On November seventeenth, 350 New England had its first convergence in Boston. People from every state in New England and New York attended. There were college groups, 350 state groups, and walk-ins who were intrigued by the signs. The day began with five panelists presenting on their experiences as activists on the frontlines of these battles. One of the most powerful points that was made addressed having the various groups work together to achieve a common goal. As panelist Mary Anne Babinski put it, "This is not just our battle...we are fighting a fight for the globe, fighting to save the planet for future generations." In the past, we have all been very focused on the battles close to home, but we really need to pay more attention to all of the battles in order to resolve any of them. I had a conversation with Linda Murray, a professor from the University of Cincinnati, who said, "We will be infinitely more productive if we work together as a unit. Having people work on their own projects is great, but we will not ever accomplish anything substantial if we do only that. It is imperative that we work as a greater unit if we want to make an impact."

Here at Vermont Commons we have many people who care about the climate crisis. As individuals we can make a difference, but if we come together we will be far more powerful. We need to establish our own group of individual students and faculty who care enough about the climate crisis to raise awareness in our own little community and get the word out to people in our lives outside of school. It is something that is missing here, something that really should be a part of any school, particularly Vermont Commons whose mission is to create "engaged ecological citizens." The mission of 350.org is really the mission of all responsible thinking citizens and it cannot be achieved unless people begin working together for a common goal.

For those who are interested in working together to raise awareness here at VCS and banding together with the greater 350 movement, please contact me at crutz@vermontcommons.org.

This Week in Photos

