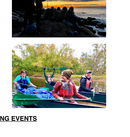
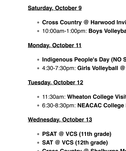
NEWS & NOTES

October 8, 2021

Enjoy the long weekend!





UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, October 9

- **Cross Country @ Harwood Invitational**
- 10:00am-1:00pm: **Boys Volleyball @ Rice**

Monday, October 11

- **Indigenous People's Day (NO SCHOOL)**
- 4:30-7:30pm: **Girls Volleyball @ Essex**

Tuesday, October 12

- 11:30am: **Wheaton College Visit**
- 6:30-8:30pm: **NEACAC College Fair @ St. Michael's College**

Wednesday, October 13

- **PSAT @ VCS (11th grade)**
- **SAT @ VCS (12th grade)**
- **Cross Country @ Shelburne Museum (Middle School Only)**

Thursday, October 14

- 4:30-7:00pm: **Girls Volleyball @ Colchester**

Friday, October 15

- 8:30am: **St. Olaf College Visit**
- 9:00-11:20am: **Grandparents and Grand Friends Day**
- 6:00-9:00pm: **All-School Bonfire (158 Charles Rd, Williston)**

Other Upcoming Social Events

Bonfire – Friday, October 15 – 6:00-9:00

Corn Maze @ Sam Mazzara's – Friday, October 22 – 3:30-6:00

Pumpkin Carving – Friday, October 29 – 3:30-4:30

News from College Counseling

Upcoming College Visits for October:

College Visits are primarily Virtual Visits this year, so please email Marta to register and get the Zoom link ahead of time. This is a great opportunity to connect with the Regional Rep and learn more about a college or a university. Once you have registered for a college visit, please plan on attending as the College Rep will be expecting you.

- Tues. 10/12 @ 11:30, Wheaton College
- Fri. 10/15 @ 8:30, St. Olaf College
- Weds. 10/20 @ 1:40, Carleton College
- Thurs. 10/21 @ 10:00, University of Rochester
- Fri. 10/22 @ 8:30, Reed College
- Thurs. 10/28 @ 10:00, Dickinson College

On **Tuesday, October 12th, the NEACAC College Fair** will take place at St. Michael's College from **6:30-8:30 pm** in the Tarrant Center. Please use this link for more information. If you prefer to attend a Virtual Fair event, there are a number of dates available through the NEACAC College Fair organization.

Applications for SDLC Now Available (And Due Soon!)

Are you interested in attending the Student Diversity Leadership Conference? This amazing 4-day conference is put on by NAIS each year, and brings together passionate high-school student leaders from around the country to engage, discuss, and inspire each other to create school communities that celebrate and embrace the identities and diversity of all their students. Students who attend the conference come away energized, inspired, and transformed, and we have spoke to several 8 VCS students this year! The conference will be online, from Monday, Nov 29th to Thurs. Dec 2nd, but our VCS delegation will attend together, from our building. **If you would like to attend,** please complete this application **(link only works with your @vermontcommons email address) by Wednesday, Oct 13th at the very latest.** You'll need parent and advisor approval to submit your application, so please plan ahead! The application won't take long, but we do need to know that you and your support team have put some thought into your attendance. Please email Kathryn McDermott with any questions! And we hope you apply!

News from Amber in Development

Last day for guests to RSVP for our fully virtual Grandparents and Grand Friends Day is this **Monday, October 11!** Make sure your grandparents/friends (auntie/uncle, family friend, etc) know the big-day is Friday, October 15, from 9:00 - 11:30 Eastern time. They'll meet with Dexter, attend Morning Meeting, and observe 2nd period classes (all via Zoom). Invites went out by email, but guests can also RSVP to me at amber@vermontcommons.org.

Support VCS with a Gift to the Annual Fund

It's our 25th year! As a young school, we rely on the Annual Fund to provide critical support for our operating budget. Your gifts make an immediate impact, contributing to everything from faculty salaries and financial aid to field trips and Encounter Weeks. You can even designate your gift for academic programs, faculty support, financial aid, arts, athletics, or other areas VCS needs it most. Thank you for investing in our students and our community!

Give To Vermont Commons

Covid Testing

Our Covid testing program is off to a good start. We will test students on Tuesday rather than Monday next week since we won't be in school on Monday. After next week, we'll return to our regular schedule of testing on Mondays. If you have NOT yet given consent for your child to be tested and would like to, please visit this website to give consent.

Yearbook Committee Announcement

Students, if you are interested in joining the yearbook committee, please speak to Amy or Frances in person, or send either of us an email at: fcannon@vermontcommons.org and avillamson@vermontcommons.org We had our first meeting this week, and began to choose colors for the cover and interior of the yearbook; if you have input, let us know and come to a meeting if you're able. Our next meeting will be Thursday, Oct 14th during lunch, outdoors by the picnic tables at the South side of the building, or in the cafeteria if it is raining. Thanks!

Bonfire!

Our annual bonfire will take place next Friday, October 15! This is a tremendous community event and we're thrilled to be able to stage it again this year. Please consider donating some food or supplies with you by signing up on this SignUpGenius (thanks to Simon and Magnus for arranging it).

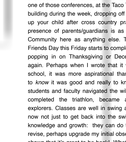
The bonfire will be at Kurt Schulz's and Marielle Goossens' farm located at 158 Charles Road, Williston, VT 05495. The event will run from 6:00pm-9:00, with the fire actually being lit around 6:30-7:00. In addition to the food and bonfire, we will also have some music playing and will honor our fall athletes! We hope to see you there!

Attention Poets and Writers

Frances would like to announce the following two opportunities for submitting your poetry. If you have any questions, feel free to email her.

The Sundog Poetry Book Award, deadline Oct 10th, for a manuscript of poems (at least 48 pages).

The Smith College Poetry Prize for High School Girls, for a single poem under 25 lines long.



Filmmaking Encounter Week

Fifteen students spent the week at North Beach and Lone Rock Point in Burlington, making films. They were introduced to the entire process, from story conception through filming and editing, and each group chose their own genre/style of film (of course, there HAD to be at least one horror movie...😉). Enjoy!

- Mark & Frances

The White Dress - Leah, Haddie, Kai, Lucas & Zinn (and here's their bloopers reel)

Tour of the States: Ep. 14: Vermont - Tyler, Evie, Dylan, Luke, Jackson, Greta

Intro to Encounter Weeks - Adelie, Toby, Casey, Asher

Hello from Jill in the Admissions Office!

Fall Open House, one of our biggest admission events, is right around the corner on Sunday, October 24th at 2pm! If you would like to be a parent ambassador at the event, please send me a note or give a call. I'd be thrilled to have your help. I'm happy to go over what being an ambassador' entails, too. Really, it's pretty easy and fun. You get to share our school, hang out with our faculty and parents - AND meet some really neat folks. Kristen has beautiful posters at the front desk if you'd like to hang one or two in your local haunts (coffee shop, co-op, library?). You are welcome to post the event on your Front Porch Forum or personal Facebook, too.

Please reach out with any questions or suggestions! I enjoy hearing from you! jstrandberg@vermontcommons.org or 802-923-6286. Thank you for your wonderful and helpful support!

Notes from the Head of School

It was fantastic to see so many of you today, in the halls and at the picnic tables outside, meeting with your child's advisor. If Encounter Week was enormous in our return to a largely normal school year, your presence on campus—be it in one of those conferences, at the Taco Truck on Wednesday, volunteering in the building during the week, dropping off a lunch or Model UN deposit, or joining up your child after cross country practice—is equally momentous. Regular presence of parents/guardians is as important a part of what we mean by Community here as anything else. The return of Grandparents and Grand Friends Day this Friday starts to complete the picture, and when the alums start popping in on Thanksgiving or December breaks, we'll know we're whole again. Perhaps when I wrote that it was good to be back the first week of school, it was more aspirational than actual: we hadn't had enough time to know it was good and really to know who we were yet as a school. But students and faculty navigated the wilderness river, surmounted the Beehive, completed the triathlon, became auteurs, composers, conservers, and explorers. Classes are well in swing and the students have had enough time now not just to get back into the swing but also to start demonstrating real knowledge and growth: they can do things they couldn't do a month ago. I'll revise, perhaps upgrade my initial observation and claim and say evidence has shown that it's great to be back! Whether or not you've had a chance to come by yet, I hope you'll join the all-school bonfire a week from tonight (10/15/21), starting at 6 p.m. This annual gathering, celebration of our fall athletes, and food and fun extravaganza is not to be missed!

While folks were mostly away, we underwent a few more campus improvements. The small water flood incident from a few weeks ago is nearly repaired. A new trenched storm drain line has been connected to the catch basin below the volleyball court in the south lawn and the entrance walkway is nearly returned to normal. The admin hallway and physics classroom are, as we speak, getting their finishing coats of drywall mud in preparation for the last vinyl baseboard. Dr. Magoon should be back up and running in his classroom by the end of next week and the Senior Admin team back in our homes at the same time. An old, frayed closet just off the Commons Room is nearly completed being brought up to partial energy codes with several inches of new mineral wool insulation. Picnic tables ordered in August have arrived, been assembled, and spread around the schoolyard, and the new Adirondack chairs are just waiting to be assembled (let me know if you want to lend a hand!) before likewise finding their new homes around our green space. And updated projectors for the Commons and classrooms are starting to arrive, enhancing clarity and dependability for better teaching and learning.

The fall college application season is literally just around the corner, and admissions officers have begun visiting Vermont Commons (via Zoom and in-person). This Wednesday, our Juniors take the PSAT and Seniors take the SAT. The Seniors have assembled their lists of where they're planning to apply and have begun their essays. If this process is new to you, I encourage you to

to and begun that process. If their applications enjoy the same success they're having in terms of taking up the mantle of student leadership in our school, they'll be sure to get into an incredible collection of schools that match their dreams, goals, and intentions. Best of luck, Class of '22! With those admissions officers coming our way, now's a great time for Juniors to attend one of their visits and start to learn straight from the horse's mouth what sets one college apart from another. You can see the college visits posted right on our Community Calendar.

Lastly, I encourage us all to take a moment to reflect on why we're not in school this coming Monday. For years, and certainly through my childhood, this federal holiday was celebrated as Columbus Day in observance of the explorer's contact with this continent. In the last handful of years in Vermont and increasingly around the country, the holiday's name is being replaced with the phrase Indigenous People's Day, and we've adopted that as well at Vermont Commons—both the name and taking a day away from school to reflect on what exactly that means and why that name change is important. As a lifelong learner of history, I've both unlearned what I was taught at a young age about this so-called discovery of America and replaced that with information about what actually happened at that particular moment of European contact, by whom, and where. That Columbus never stepped foot in North America and that his actions were less savory than what the old children's stories purported makes a good case for letting go of that particular tradition. This particular de-emphasizing of Columbus on this day has made way for an emphasis on the Native American, Indigenous, First Nation, Abenaki (and other) people whose land this was and is—the very land on which I sit and write this at 75 Green Mountain Drive. This is good, right, and overdue.

It took me traveling with a close friend twenty years ago this summer through the Black Hills in South Dakota to begin truly to understand what work needed undoing. I had read *From Where the Sun Now Stands*, a novel about Chief Joseph, for school. I'd reviewed *Prison Writings* as a young journalist and learned in depth about Leonard Peltier and A.I.M. I'd listened to and shared with students Robbie Robertson's *Contact from the Underworld of Redboy*, hosted Simon Ortiz as a writer in residence, and taught Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* on several occasions, and more. But driving with Dave, a Native American friend, across South Dakota on a long road trip out west, stopping—the first time for both of us—at Little Big Horn, the Black Hills, Rushmore, and the Crazy Horse Monument and encountering all of those things first through his lens opened something in him, and me. You grow up hearing about Columbus Day and seeing postcards of Rushmore, and you don't think too much about it. But you drive into the Black Hills knowing that they are considered not only sacred by the Lakota Sioux but actually, literally the center of the universe, and you stand at the foot of Rushmore and understand that this sacred mountainside was literally dynamited and permanently imprinted with faces symbolic of the overrunning of Native America, and things shift. And you stand next to one of the survivors, and you can never see those faces the same way, ever again.

Wendell Berry once wrote, "There are no unsacred places; there are only sacred places and desecrated places." The collective shift from Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day is in the right direction. It doesn't fix anything—it's not that easy, but it announces the intention to do so. Berry doesn't answer the question of whether or not desecration can be reversed. Let us be a people, or peoples, both of hope and action: let us believe that it can, that the sacredness of land, all land, all peoples' land, can once again be revealed and revered. And may we be good stewards of the land we, Vermont Commons, work and live upon in our journey, doing along the way whatever is in our capacity in word and action to honor those, the Abenaki, whose land it is.

Amy's Bitmoji School Counseling Room

Guide for Students and Families

Core & Community Calendars 2021-2022

VCS Website

Give To Vermont Commons

Vermont Commons School

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