

Soar Newsletter

FALL 2014



*Above: One of the graduating seniors receives her diploma
 Below: A high school student accepts a vocational award from Claire Thompson*



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Graduation 2014

On Wednesday, June 18th, school, family, and community came together to celebrate the accomplishments of students throughout the 2013-2014 school year.

Two high school students earned their diplomas and walked out of the Soar gym as proud, high school graduates. During their time here, both students had grown significantly, been excellent role models, and made positive contributions in their different classes. We are proud to send them off and wish them all the best.

Graduating the eighth grade were five students. One of these students prepared a speech that was read by their teacher, Heather Young. He spoke of the challenges they faced coming together as a class, but also how it paid off. He pointed towards

the importance of friendship, camaraderie, and finding the positives each day.

This student was also awarded the Eighth Grade Citizenship Award, presented by the Franklin/Grand Isle County Bar Association. He not only was focused every class, put forth great effort into every assignment, but he cared about his peers and made sure they knew that they mattered.

A high school student was presented with the Vocational Achievement Award. Presented by Claire Thompson, this student was given recognition for his hard work during vocational classes in and out of school. It also acknowledged his ongoing employment at The Crossing, and willingness to push himself when others were quitting or not even willing

to try.

Many other recognitions included perfect attendance, academic achievement awards, transitioning students (students returning to their sending schools), and of course there was music!

The ceremony opened with the K-4 class performing 'Lean on Me'. A middle school student played 'Twinkle Twinkle' flawlessly on the violin, and the ceremony closed with a staff and student group singing and playing instruments to 'Wagon Wheel'.

We want to thank families and all of our speakers. Thanks to Claire Thompson and the Culinary Connection for the delicious refreshments that were enjoyed afterwards. Also, thanks to Howards Flower Shop and Heald Funeral Home for the beautiful flower arrangements.

Summer Jobs All Around



Thanks to the Work Investment Act, a Federal Program through the Dept. of Labor, there was yet another successful summer of work for 13 high school students in the area.

Claire Thompson worked tirelessly this spring to put students in placements where they could get a feel for training and employment in local sites. A total of thirteen youths experi-

enced hard work, and consequently, monetary earnings.

Six students were old enough to be given employment training, and several were offered positions at these sites. One student is continuing on with their training with the potential to hire.

Seven students, just shy of the age requirement for employment, worked in teams to com-

plete service projects at these same job sites.

Students reported that their summer earnings allowed them to purchase iPods, phones, and bikes.

Special thanks to all of the community sites that welcomed our students this summer!

(Highgate Arena, St. Albans Bay, and Vermont Organics.)



Above: New staff members; Jen Gabriel, Randy Pike (returning but new position), and Ben Cullen are all working in our elementary school



Above: A high school student learns about sailing at the Lake Champlain Community Sailing Center

Below: Pictured is a student scaling rocks in Bolton, and at the bottom, two students and a staff member descend Smugglers' Notch after a day at ArborTrek



What's New?

This year, we started our first day with sixty-three students. Spread across three programs, they are strong numbers.

However, there are only three new staff this fall. These new members of Soar join a team of many dedicated veterans.

Adding to the behavioral interventionist team are Jen Gabriel and Ben Cullen. Jen comes to us from NCSS,

where she worked in the residential behavioral support team. Ben joins the middle school team from MVU. We are happy to have both new team members.

Filling an elementary teaching vacancy, is Randy Pike. Randy is not technically 'new', as he moved from being a high school BI to teaching our youngest students. He has made a smooth transition and the students are engaged and happy with their new teacher.

High School S.E.R.V.E. Program

This summer, the high school programming looked different than years past.

During the four week S.E.R.V.E. program, (Service, Education, Recreation, Vocation, and Exposure), students were given the opportunity to engage in recreational activities such as sailing, rock climbing, canoeing, hiking, and the challenge course at Arbortrek Adventures. Here, students pushed themselves past their comfort zones and really built self confidence.

Students also completed daily journals based on programming and met for 3 separate academic workshops. Program

participants also prepared meals for a local homeless shelter and assisted in Bay Day cleanup.

Program coordinators, Devin Quinlin and Brad Messier, both agreed that the summer went better than they had expected. Both new and returning students adjusted well to the change in structure and addition of educational workshops.

While touring Ben and Jerry's, students and staff gained a valuable message about hard work. A plant managers spoke about working from beginning employee, going to school while working, and eventually becoming part of management.

Also new this summer, was the addition of Student of the Week.

The four students selected this summer exhibited the values of the program, challenged themselves, and were leaders for their peers. These students received prizes for their hard work, such as fishing poles, a Camelback, or even a tent.

Those students eligible for the work program toured local businesses and engaged in on-the-job training at the St. Albans Bay Park, Highgate Arena, and Soar's own greenhouse and garden. One student, and the only one to maximize all of his training hours, said this was the best part of his summer. He is currently looking forward to having a job placement for this school year.

Annual BI Conference

Soar and NCSS behavioral staff attended the 6th Annual Success Beyond Six Conference, in August. This conference provides valuable information around behavior, mental health, innovative ways to help struggling students succeed, and integrative ideas for family and schools.

The conference allowed staff to select four workshops to attend throughout the day.

There were over twenty from which to choose.

Not only did our NCSS staff participate in the conference, but there were several that were presenters too.

Matt Habedank and Tim Holcomb presented a workshop on group contingencies, while Devin Quinlan and Christie Moffett presented on bullying and harassment. Amy Irish also organized and moderated

two behavioral interventionist panels. Lee Trombley, Soar BI, sat on one of these panels and discussed successful ways in which to work with families.

Some of the workshops offered centered upon autism, trauma, positive behavior interventions, and engaging students.

The conference was attended by almost 500 behavioral staff from across the state.

Elementary Summer Program

This summer, with one of the largest groups in several summers, the elementary summer program's 32 students participated in a variety of themed-based activities and field trips.

Elementary students visited Northern Lights Rock and Ice challenge course to push themselves through the five story ropes course, zip line, and rock wall. Back to School students took a day to go to CHAMP (Champlain Adaptive Mounted Program), in South Hero, for a day of horseback. Back to School will continue these visits twice a month throughout the school year.

Students attended the annual Lake Monster's Summer Camp Day and even experienced a

meet and greet with one of the players. Dominique Battuone, a pitcher on the team from Maryland, came to school following the game. He spoke about playing for the Lake Monsters and also had a great time playing some morning meeting games with the students.

Out on the lake, students enjoyed a pizza party and trivia cruise on the Spirit of Ethan Allen. This event also had music courtesy of our own clinician and DJ, Nick Hunter.

Also an exciting affair this summer was the cook off. Student groups prepared a dish to be judged by our home-school

coordinators. The prize won was a special breakfast. Some of the foods made were pasta salad, taco salad, vanilla cookie floats, dirt cake, and three different kinds of brownies.

Additionally, students participated in a community scavenger hunt, visited Champlain Valley Equipment for a tractor ride, and completed many, undercover academic tasks that looked a lot more like fun than work.

Organized by Nicole Rees, and using the four, different themed weeks, students definitely got their fill of cooking, fitness, community, and team building skills.



Left: Students dance on the Spirit of Ethan Allen
Above: A student is ready to go on the Northern Lights Rock and Ice ropes course

Below: A student surfs at Jay Peak Pump House Waterpark



Recipe Corner

While the Culinary Connection has had the summer off, they are already back in the kitchen.

The first board meeting for which they prepare lunch, occurred in just the second week of school. Open House is another big event for them in early October.

They've also got plans for those delicious Friday lunches. The first week of Friday lunch was chicken and broccoli penne with fresh pesto. This was served with zucchini apple crisp.

They have also given us a recipe we can either try ourselves or wait and crave until they offer it this fall...

Pasta Broccoli and Chicken

Ingredients:

- 12 ounces rigatoni pasta
- 1/2 lb fresh broccoli florets
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 tbsp minced garlic
- 2 tbsp pesto
- 1 cup chopped tomatoes
- 3/4 cup grated parmesan cheese
- 1 lb boneless chicken breast halves, cooked and chopped
- salt to taste
- ground pepper to taste

Directions:

1. In a large pot with boiling salted water, cook rigatoni pasta until al dente, then drain
2. Meanwhile, blanch broccoli florets in a medium saucepan, remove from pan. In same pan, sauté minced garlic and pesto sauce in olive oil for 2 minutes. Add chopped tomatoes and set aside.
3. In a large bowl, toss cooked pasta with blanched broccoli, cooked chicken, and garlic/tomato mixture. Add grated parmesan cheese, salt, and pepper.



3rd Annual Independent Schools Conference

The 3rd Annual Independent Schools Conference was held, for a second year, at Soar Learning Center. On August 20th, 160 educators, from eleven different independent schools, gathered in St. Albans Bay.

Organized by Justina Jennett (Soar Learning Center Educational Team Leader), Cara Capparelli (Clinical Director, NFI), and their team from attending schools, the day-long event allows staff teaching in alternative education to share ideas, discuss challenges, and attend workshops and trainings in specific areas related to their work.

The planning for this event begins in late fall, not long after the prior year's conference. Jennett and Capparelli put a great deal of time and energy into making improvements each year. This year, some changes were made to streamline registration (online accessibility) and also to offer even a more wide array of workshops. This behind the scenes work, made the day go more smoothly but also increased the resources and learning with which those attending can take back to their own school and classroom.

The day began with breakfast, provided by Soar Learning Center. Welcoming the visitors was NCSS Executive Di-

rector, Ted Mable. While Ted has effectively been the NCSS leader for many years, he has an education background, having been a superintendent in Burlington. With this experience, he understands and spoke to the difficulty, yet great importance, of meeting the needs of all learners. His words were a valuable launch pad for the day ahead.

The morning and afternoon sessions offered many workshops options. John Spinney, from the VT AOE (agency of education) presented on Personal Learning Plans. This workshop focused on the implications of Act 77 in special education, student goals, and work-based learning for grades 7-12.

There was a screening and discussion of 'The Hungry Heart', by Bess O'Brien. This film, created in St. Albans, focuses on the work of Dr. Fred Holmes and his drive to help those struggling with addition. Not only is the use of suboxone, the challenges faced throughout recovery, and the community's varying opinions discussed, but also the importance of support and relationships for these patients. This is a subject hitting home in many schools today, and one that needs to



Above: Justina Jennett and Cara Capparelli, event organizers, take a break during the busy conference day

be addressed and not ignored.

Another workshop offered was called 'Dragon Riding Lessons', led by Kevin Perline, from the Jean Garvin School. In this workshop, educators explored stress, how the anatomy of our brain processes it, the physical impacts and mental reactions we encounter through stressful experiences, as well as how to navigate stress in healthy ways. This workshop made

valuable connections between trauma and stress, but also provided staff with hands-on activities to practice and take back to their own students experiencing stress.

Other trainings offered included:

- *Outdoor Leadership and Teambuilding
- *EdTech: Transforming Your Teaching with Bloom's and SAMR
- *Introduction to Mindfulness (beginner and advanced)
- *Connected Educators

Thank you to the attending schools: East Valley Academy, Laraway School, Cornerstone School, Caledonia School, Centerpoint School, Turning Points, Buffalo Mountain School, Baird School, Jean Garvin School, and Choice Academy.

Thank you to Tatro's, St. Albans, for catering lunch, and Soar Learning Center staff for hosting.

The Soar Greenhouse: Ready to Grow

Thanks to staff and community members donating time, the greenhouse has garden beds and is only waiting for doors and a vent system. Once those are in place, it will be officially ready to grow.

This fall, the greenhouse is already housing some vegetables and herbs. Both students and staff are anxious to put it to use. Just in the first week of school, it's already been busy with a new class using it partly as their classroom. Claire Thompson and John Chittick are teaching a class, twice a week, about planting, harvesting, and all the ways to use the natural resources we have growing around us.

The class will spend a great deal of time in the greenhouse, the classroom, and the kitchen. They will also continue our school's relationship with the Vermont Foodbank and the 'Seeds for Growth' program.

This summer, from the seeds they provided us, we've given back the 30% of our crops to the foodbank. We had, and continue to have, many strong growers this year such as cucumbers, cabbage, peppers, cherry tomatoes, swiss chard, eggplant, carrots, onions, beans, zucchini, and summer squash.



In the high school gardens, students did get to learn about blight, as many of our large tomatoes were lost. However, with our produce, we've blanched and frozen beans, made pesto, canned 50 quarts of tomatoes, and made lots and lots of salsa.

These foods will all be used throughout the year for the cooking classes, and of course full school events, such as our Thanksgiving feast.



Left: In math, the Menger sponge is a fractal curve. It is named for its inventor Karl Menger (1902-1985). In order to construct the sponge each student made cubic modules out of six business cards per cube. It took twenty modules to build the next iteration. The cubes interlock - no glue or tape!! During the first week of school, every high school student constructed a twenty cube module. Twenty of those modules were used to construct the next iteration.



Above: Our library, overseen by Arlene Thompson, is looking better than it has in some time. Organized, homey, and opening pages and ideas to students, it is a great resource for our school.

Right: The elementary gardens also had a great growing season this year! Erika LeClair, green thumb extraordinaire, saw to it that students were involved in much of the harvesting, helped make salsa and onion rings, and also enjoyed zucchini bread, made and frozen over the summer. Below: Zucchini apple pie and zucchini bread students are enjoying at snack time.



Right: A Back to School student enjoys time on a tractor at Champlain Valley Equipment
Left: Bon Appétit! A student helps prepare a meal during the summer program.



Up Coming Events This Fall

This fall, there are many events and projects in the making. First off, we will have our Annual **Open House on Thursday, October 9th, from 6-7:30 PM.** Please come and visit our school, meet our staff, and see all of the work and fun our students have been up to since the first day on August 25th.



On October 22nd, we will honor Unity Day. This will be the third year we work to raise bullying awareness, and again, the 6/7th grade is already hard at work planning activities and information for their peers. Bullying is a problem in any school, and with ever advancing technology, it can take

many forms. Our students will work together to raise awareness of the topic and learn about how to deal with and rise above bullying.

Following Unity Day, classes will continue to talk about and complete projects around bullying prevention. This will culminate with a presentation by John Halligan. Mr. Halligan, a native Vermonter, lost his son to depression and bullying. He speaks all over the country to help students in middle and high school see how just one person can

change, and even save, someone's life. He spoke here in March of 2008 and we are excited to welcome him back.

This year also brings a variety of club activities (every other Friday) to the elementary, and a wide array of interest based Friday classes for the high school.

Before we know it, we will be preparing our Thanksgiving Feast, and this year, we have an abundant amount of vegetables to use, grown and tended right here at our school.

So many things growing here, and so many things we are looking forward to in this new, 2014-2015 school year.

UNITE

AGAINST BULLYING!