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Community Works Journal™

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A College Student "Serves to Learn"

by Rebecca Heller

The classical Dartmouth College curriculum separates "academic courses" from "community service." Traditionally oriented faculty and administrators sometimes perceive useful or "hands-on" activities that serve community needs to lack intellectual merit or to be "vocational." I disagree. Community-based learning applies critical thinking and intellectual rigor towards an issue of immediate relevance to the surrounding community.

Resistance to community-based learning initiatives can limit students' conceptions of where exactly intellectual activity can take place, or even which activities require critical thinking and intellectual rigor. A liberal arts degree is intended to allow its students to think outside their occupational box, but many students are unconsciously learning that in order to properly flex their brains outside of college, they need a navy blazer and a proverbial white collar.

I believe that part of our ongoing obligation to our community includes efforts by Dartmouth students to serve community members outside the official borders of the college who may not have access to the wealth of resources that we enjoy within

Harvest, *cont'd. on p. 8*

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Community Works Journal

Creating Sustainable Communities

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Contact us if you are involved in an educational project like the ones you read about in *Community Works Journal*. Our readers will greatly value your story, experience and curriculum ideas. Submission Guidelines are available on-line at:

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OUR MISSION is to promote exemplary teaching practices, programs and models that help students become caring, responsible and active members of their communities.

About Vermont Community Works

VCW serves as an educational resource for innovative community-based and service-learning curriculum strategies and models.

We believe that learning opportunities grounded in the local community are critical to promoting a connected, purposeful and positive school experience that contributes directly to the development of young people as healthy, caring, informed, and active citizens.

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About *Community Works Journal*

We publish *Community Works Journal* quarterly in support of teaching practices that build community.

Since 1996 the *Journal* has served a crucial need for dialogue, connection and models—a resource that inspires by example. *Community Works Journal* is distributed across North America and beyond, both in print and electronically, to teachers, schools, programs, and networks.

Community Works Journal showcases innovative educational strategies and practices that involve teachers and students in important work within their communities.

We welcome unsolicited article ideas; they will be reviewed and their authors contacted promptly. Guidelines are available on-line.

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THIS ISSUE Finds *Community Works Journal* moving in exciting directions with old friends. As we mentioned last issue, folklorist-educator and cultural explorer **Greg Sharrow** of the **Vermont Folklife Center** joins us with a regular featured essay. Greg will help us look at the larger context and issues of bringing classroom and community together. We know that our readers will also be pleased to see regular contributions from veteran educator-writer **Eve Pranis** of the **National Gardening Association**. In this issue, Eve shares the work of students and teachers from Parkview Center School involved with **The Big Green Worm Farm** in Simi Valley, California.

Nationally acclaimed educator-writer **David Sobel,** director of the **Community-based School Environmental Education Program (CO-SEED)** at Antioch New England comes on board as a contributing editor. In addition to sharing his insight, David will be helping to steer important articles our way from teachers in the field. In this issue we are pleased to offer an excerpt from his new book, ***Place-Based Education: Connecting Communities and Classrooms***, published by **The Orion Society.**

Also in this issue, **Erica Zimmerman**, founder of the **Sustainable Schools Project**, shares her insights on the importance of educating for Sustainability. This crucial concept can inform, regenerate, and advance our thinking around education based in the local community, providing a larger framework for all our work. Co-coordinator **Jen Cirillo** contributes a look at SSP's work supporting Champlain Elementary teachers in Burlington, Vermont.

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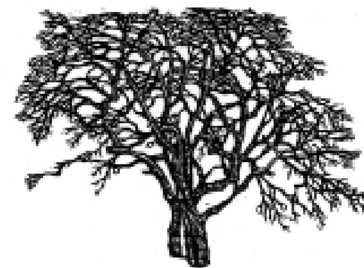
The Sustainable Schools Project is working closely with Community Works to integrate the concepts of Sustainability more deeply within the **Summer Institute on Service-Learning at Shelburne Farms**. This year's Institute (July 19-23, 2004) offers an enhanced experience with a larger full-time **Institute Faculty** of veteran practitioners who join us from **New York**, **Massachusetts**, and **Vermont**, and **Maryland**. Additionally, a wide variety of guest faculty members will cover important areas and share work during the week. Set in the breathtaking landscape of Shelburne Farms, the Institute has proven to be an important national gathering point for educators, from beginners to experienced practitioners, who share an interest in Service-Learning. Participants from our 2003 Summer Institute share glimpses in this issue of their work with students since last July.

More details on the Institute, along with registration information, can be found both in this issue and at: www.vermontcommunityworks.org.

Community Works Journal is the collective effort of the many educators who contribute their work, reflection, and writing to each issue. Shared goals and financial need have drawn together new partners intent on keeping the *Journal* available as a resource to its readers across the country and beyond.

We have inaugurated a **Sustaining Partners Program** to help ensure the ongoing financial viability of the *Journal.* We welcome and appreciate the leadership and support exhibited by **Shelburne Farms** and **Antioch New England Graduate School's CO-SEED Program** as the first organizations to step forward and make a long-term commitment to the *Journal's* viability. In addition to helping broaden distribution, our Sustaining Partners Program will enhance our ability to do high quality story research.

The National Gardening Association and **Vermont Folklife Center** have also joined with us as partners in this enterprise by contributing staff support. We encourage organizations with an interest in helping to spread the ideas represented in the *Journal* to contact us at 802-655-5918.



Rooted in Questions:
The Path to Education for Sustainability

Thanks to the vision of Shelburne Farms' Megan Camp, who continually offers support and encouragement to partnerships among people pursuing complementary goals, Erica Zimmerman and Jen Cirillo are coordinating the Vermont Education for Sustainability Project and Shelburne Farms' Sustainable Schools Project. As Megan likes to say, "Sustainability is the goal. Place is the context. Service-learning is the strategy." We are pleased to announce that Community Works Journal *is now a proud partner in this enterprise. The Sustainable Schools Project is described in an article by Jen Cirillo elsewhere in this issue. Below, in the first of several columns, Erica Zimmerman describes how she came to believe in the importance of Education for Sustainability, and why it makes sense.*

My path to Education for Sustainability is laid with dirt, twists and questions. It began in western Kenya, on my third day into a study abroad semester, just past a sign marking the equator. I had gotten off the bus and was headed on my own to meet my home-stay family. As the rooty footpath reached a crossroads just outside of the village, I was greeted by a group of young children, perhaps five to twelve years old. They immediately surrounded me, a jumble of outstretched arms, smiles, and questions. Suddenly one question came through clearly in unforgettable syntax: "What are the factors that account for New York's growth as a harbor?"

I stumbled. The strangeness of this burst of familiarity stopped me in my tracks. Not only that, I was stumped. My process-oriented, concept-rich education was sorely lacking in geographical facts. I stammered, "Maybe because it's located on the edge of the land?"

The response was a flurry of other questions: "How deep are the layers of permafrost?" "Who created the Tennessee River Valley Authority?" But in a moment, without a chance to consider the questions or contexts, I was ensconced in my host family's compound, seated in front of bowl of fresh groundnuts and bananas whose taste further awakened the heightened perceptions I was already experiencing.

I was there to widen my knowledge of Africa, eager to go beyond the American and British library I'd long studied. I was there to study East African history, politics, ecology, and literature in their own place! I soon discovered my young friends in the village were reaching out to make a connection with their curriculum as well. At first I thought they wanted to welcome me with something of my own place—a chance to share the best English sentences they knew, or to make a real-world connection with these unknown terms. But as I soon learned from my home-stay sister, the answers to all those geography questions were already recorded many times over in the kids' copybooks in anticipation of the end-of-year examinations. The pre-reform British O-Level examinations were the ticket to secondary school, and their preparation constituted much of the primary school curriculum.

The contrast between what I was there to learn and what they were learning struck hard:

Learning without relevance.

Learning without context.

Learning without experiencing.

Learning without process.

Learning without voice.

This is what the children were left with, what colonial education had left behind — a legacy of disempowerment and token gains. And meanwhile, I, who had the privilege of years of building concepts and skills, had to go around the world to experience the education that really raised questions. I was left with the commitment to seek opportunities and resources for an education that would support the positive but complicated path Kenya's communities were seeking, a path just then becoming known as sustainable development. It took a journey to Kenya to help me see what was missing at home.

So though I wasn't always aware of it, the path towards Education for Sustainability defines the career path I've taken in education. Always at the times when I am finding my way, my path is rooted in questions. As a teacher, I learned to ask questions. As a curriculum coach, I learned to prompt and design questions.

The story of my visit to Kenya came back to me about a year into my current job as the coordinator of the Vermont Education for Sustainability Project. I was helping teachers make use of the two new standards on Sustainability and Place as the cornerstones of units that engaged kids in improving the future of their local communities. A colleague asked me, "Why do you need both standards? Why do they go together?" Another stumble. This time the answer came from my reflection on the Kenyan copy books.

When the two new standards were adopted in 2000, many teachers began using "4.6 Understanding Place" to anchor some of their favorite units and projects in the standards. Helping children explore the cultural, social and environmental

Sustainability, *cont'd. on p. 28*

Ethnographic Inquiry as a Tool for Community Discovery

In this ongoing column, Contributing Editor Gregory Sharrow ponders the connections between local community and curriculum.Greg is a former Vermont classroom teacher and currently Director of Education at the Vermont Folklife Center. He holds a Ph.D degree in Folklore from the University of Pennsylvania and has done extensive field research. Greg is author of a number of publications, including a multicultural textbook Many Cultures, One People. *His current work focuses on the interplay of folklife and personal identity and the role that culture plays in our construction of self.*

I come to ethnography through my academic training as a folklorist, but when I stop to think about it I realize that in a sense I've been an ethnographer all of my life. I grew up in northeastern Indiana where my mother's family has lived since the 1830s. Her family was fully integrated into the farm culture of the region, and I was a precocious, talkative child with peculiar interests. Although there were people I felt close to and for whom I had great respect, I had little in common with anyone in my childhood world. I was a perpetual outsider, participating as an insider and observing everything that was going on around me with tremendous interest, but at a distance. At the time I didn't have a clue how to resolve the tension between my impulse to belong and my recognition that I didn't fit, which was simultaneously both painful and liberating. And as I look back on this time I can see much in my childhood relationship to my home turf that reminds of a "professional stranger," which is sometimes offered as a gloss for the role of ethnographer. Even as a very small child I entered the lives of people who were unlike myself—many of whom were my relatives— with curiosity and compassion. The big difference is that back then I didn't know where I belonged and now, thankfully, I do.

Ethnography as an approach to the study of culture is predicated on the researcher entering into a cultural world—whether foreign or familiar—as an observer and "guest" participant. This presupposes that the researcher suspends judgment and to the degree that it's humanly possible sets aside preconceptions. The goal of this approach is to be able to see things as the person/community/culture you're studying sees them, to achieve an insider's point of view. This of course is a challenging objective.

Let's consider for a moment one of those "great divide" issues in rural communities in Vermont such as being for or against hunting. In many instances this comes down to conflicting value systems based on social class and culture, which is what those insider / outsider designations "woodchuck" and "flatlander" are really about. The best way to move forward with the challenge of being good neighbors is to open the channels of communication and try to understand where the other person is coming from. What's powerful way to do this? Ethnography.

It isn't as though I'm advocating that everyone in every town make an appointment to interview their neighbors, even though I happen to think that would be a very good idea. But what I do want to suggest is that ethnography can be used as a powerful tool with children in any school setting. It's also an approach that many teachers are well acquainted with in the guise of oral history.

Thinking about ethnography in terms of sending kids into the community to garner knowledge from community members' life experience makes this seem like a doable undertaking. But it's my concern to expand the ways in which we conventionally think about these projects. Oral history needn't be restricted only to older people, and oral history projects don't necessarily have to focus only on the past. What about sending kids out into the community to explore "difference" —cultural, racial, religious, ethnic, class difference — the very difference which is so evidently present in most public school classrooms?

In school settings there is usually a dominant cultural norm. Some children's families fall within that norm and others fall outside it. That's not a matter of bad intention on the part of school personnel, it's just the way things are. But a research project that explores a community's differing perceptions of hunting, for example, could remove the stigma from children whose families hunt, if the majority of families happen to be nonhunters (or vice versa). To approach the issue in a less head-on manner, a project could be framed around documenting the skills and expertise of local families, honoring the diversity of the community and the divergent knowledge and experience of its members. Here's a clear instance of building bridges of understanding through cultural dialogue.

As I write this column, today's newspaper announces that racism is a pressing issue for Vermont schools, bullying and harassment are endemic. What to do? Fundamental to prejudice are ignorance, misinformation, and stereotyping and among the most potent tools in addressing these are knowledge and firsthand experience. It's an axiom in the gay world that an expanding circle of face-to-face relationships with

Community Discovery, ***cont'd. on p. 29***

Place-Based Education: Connecting Classroom and Community

Photos courtesy of Rob Amberg and Rural Schools and Community Trust

We are pleased to welcome author and educator David Sobel to the pages of Community Works Journal *as a Contributing Editor. David will periodically share his insights on the nature of place-based education. The following is specially excerpted from his new book* Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities*, an offering in the The Orion Society's Nature Literacy Series. David is the Director of Teacher Certification Programs at Antioch New England Graduate School. He also co-directs the Community-based School Environmental Education Program (CO-SEED).*

Something's Happening Here

As you stroll down the halls of your neighborhood school at nine o'clock on a Wednesday morning, you notice that something is different. Many of the classrooms are empty; the students are not in their places with bright, shiny faces. Where are they? In the town woodlot, a forester teaches tenth graders to determine which trees should be marked for an upcoming thinning project. Downtown, a group of middle school students are collecting water samples in an urban stream to determine if there's enough dissolved oxygen to support reintroduced trout. Out through the windows, you can see children sitting on benches writing poems. Down the way, a group of students works with a landscape architect and the math teacher to create a map that will be used to plan the school yard garden. Here's a classroom with students. In it, eighth graders are working with second graders to teach them about the history of the local Cambodian community. In the cafeteria, the city solid waste manager is consulting with a group of fifth graders and the school lunch staff to help them design the recycling and composting program. Students' bright shiny faces are in diverse places in their school yards and communities.

You don't have to pinch yourself. It's not a dream. Place-based education is taking root in urban and rural, northern and southern, well-to-do and rough-around-the-edges schools and communities across the country. Take a whirlwind tour with me as we drop in on some of these happenings.

Two recent headlines in the Littleton, New Hampshire, *Courier* paint the picture: "Using the River as a Textbook" and "The Town Becomes the Classroom." Like many small New England cities, Littleton turned its back on its downtown river, the Ammonusuc, at the end of the nineteenth century. Now, with funding from the Department of Transportation, the town is creating a Riverwalk, which will connect Main Street with the river and open up a new economic development zone. Working in conjunction with the town planner and the town engineer, teachers and community members are engaging students in the design of a river museum at one end of the Riverwalk. Different grades will become responsible for the changing exhibitry of the museum. High school history students might create exhibits on logging history in the Great Northern Forest. Sixth-grade science students will design hands-on water testing activities. Perhaps third graders will take on the task of creating the entrance mural as part of their study of local plants and animals.

The town is already functioning as a classroom in a novel collaboration between Chutter's General Store and the marketing program at the Littleton High School's vocational center. When the well established downtown candy store realized that its internet sales site was costing more than the revenues it generated, the owners looked to the school for a solution. The high school needed more space and the marketing class was seeking real-world projects. The school district and the town agreed to rehabilitate a space below the candy store to create a marketing classroom for less than it would cost to build new space at the high school. By having the marketing class take over Chutter's internet business, the students get economics experience and the candy store owners generate a bit of revenue as a result of the reduced labor costs. Through a balanced focus on economic development and environmental preservation, the community gets revitalized and the state curriculum standards are met.

In Louisiana, getting out of the classroom often means getting into mosquitoes, so the 4H Club at Caldwell Middle School in Terrebonne Parish took on the real-world challenge of mosquito control. One parent, whose daughter has asthma, was interested in finding ways to control mosquitoes in residential areas without aerial spraying of pesticides. First, students and teachers started to experiment with raising guppies to see if they would eat mosquito larvae. But these students got a lesson in ecology when a professor from Nichols State University recommended native mosquito fish instead, because of the problems caused when nonnative species are introduced into local waters. Students bred the mosquito fish and then released them into stagnant ponds, ditches, and even swimming pools. Just a fun project? Melynda Rodrigue, 4H sponsor and Caldwell teacher, indicated that math teachers will chart the numbers of offspring and the time period needed to repopulate the tanks, science classes will study the fish's life cycle, and social studies classes will study the impact on the community's environment. Some students used their writing skills to create a brochure for distribution to the community, and other students got public speaking experience through presentations at other schools in the area.

In Berkeley, California, a similar grassroots school-and-community effort has been transformed into a bioregional initiative. From one vegetable garden at the Martin Luther King Middle School came the idea to have a garden on every school yard in Berkeley, which spread to the idea of a garden on every school yard in California. And since you can't realistically feed all the children in any one school with produce from one garden, why not create connections between local farmers and the school district? Instead of freeze-dried burritos trucked in from the Midwest, how about burritos with organic beans and cheese grown and produced by area farmers who are threatened by suburban sprawl? These ideas have led to the creation of the Food Systems Project, where the aim is to have all the food in the Berkeley school lunch program be organic and locally grown within the next decade. At the same time, food preparation and agriculture education become an integral part of each school's curriculum.

The Food Systems Project is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture's Linking Farms to Schools initiative, the California Department of Health, and the Center for Ecoliteracy, a broad coalition of funders trying to address the problems of child nutrition, school improvement, and sustainable agriculture in an integrated fashion. Project director Janet Brown comments,

> *By using food as an organizing principle for systemic change, the program addresses the root causes of poor academic performance, psychosocial behavior disorders, and escalating children's health issues such as obesity, asthma and diabetes. At the same time the program connects the loss of farmland and farming as a way of life and the social problems facing school communities.*
>
> (Sobel, *Orion Afield*, 2001)

Doesn't it make sense—using the daily meal as a focal point for learning?

Comenius, the seventeenth-century education philosopher, articulated one of the core precepts of place-based education when he said, "Knowledge of the nearest things should be acquired first, then that of those farther and farther off." (Woodhouse, *Thresholds*, 2001) You can't really get much nearer than the internal micro-environment of your digestive system as a focal point for the curriculum. The mosquito-breeding ponds in your backyard and the downtown places where you shop are similarly appropriate contexts for learning. And so, as the rallying cry for place-based educators, I nominate that popular Beatles refrain, "Get back. Get back. Get back to where you once belonged."

Distance from Beauty

If we're going to get back, we need to look first at where we are now.

Katie Avery, third grade teacher in the White Mountain-encircled town of Gorham, New Hampshire, got at the crux of the problem during a curriculum planning meeting when

Place, *cont'd. on p. 29*

Harvest for the Hungry, *cont'd. from p. 1*

the traditional boundaries of the institution. I am writing to tell you about an instance where intellectual vigor and attention to solving community problems combined for a good outcome for both learning and service.

The "Harvest for the Hungry" project began in a standard academic curriculum, in a class called Environmental Studies 39: Natural Resources and Development, taught by Professor Jack Shepherd. We were learning about theories of hunger and food security in Africa. One such theory, based on the ideas of the Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen, posits that hunger exists in the world not because there is not enough food, but because food is not being sufficiently distributed. Overall, particularly in developed nations (which the U.S. claims to be), hunger is not due to lack of food. People are hungry because they are poor, or they live in a rural area where resources are scarce and spread out, or they are paying 60% of their income toward skyrocketing housing costs or increasing gasoline and energy prices. And while these people are hungry, somewhere in the world, possibly very nearby, surplus food is being wasted.

A Local Food Web

We passionately discussed the obligation of the resource-rich to ensure the distribution of those resources to the less fortunate. Meanwhile, we sat in our air-conditioned, state of the art, Ivy League classroom and thought about "starving Africans," a politically loaded phrase that has become a euphemism for global food insecurity. If we view hunger as something inherent to a certain class of people, we effectively excuse ourselves from ever having to do anything about it.

I decided to apply this notion of food security to the Upper Connecticut River Valley. The local food web in the Upper Valley region is unique. There are a number of farms producing a wide range of goods. There are many community-based agricultural initiatives, including cooperative markets, Community Supported Agriculture and a farmer's market in most towns. The region contains a single community but separate state governments whose politics—as well as the availability of social services—differ dramatically.

What could a group of students do to help distribute community resources in a rural area with minimal infrastructure? I e-mailed about 40 people, including people in state and federal government, business, local agriculture and sustainability initiatives, as well as a few farmers I knew. I stated that I had a group of 15 students who wanted to do a project to address hunger in our region. We were willing to do anything that might be helpful, but as most of us are really carpetbaggers in this region, we ourselves felt uncomfortable determining exactly what that would be. I got several helpful responses, most of which pointed me toward a woman named Lisa Johnson who worked at a local nonprofit organization called Vital Communities.

A beautiful Saturday afternoon spent gleaning.

Gleaning

Lisa suggested that we look into something called "gleaning," the removal and distribution of excess crops from farms. We decided to contact local farmers, and send groups of student volunteers out to pick the extra crops, ultimately donating the produce to local food pantries. We began by researching the issue because we knew of no recent in-depth study of regional food security issues. We planned to implement the recommendations of our own research. It all sounded so easy. We outlined the structure of our research, split up the contact list of farmers and food shelves, then set out to save the world.

Unfortunately, saving the world never turns out to be as easy as one would like. The more research we did, the more complex the issue became. Food might need to be prepared in a commercially certified kitchen. Volunteers who were hurt gleaning or cooking could sue under worker's compensation laws. And none of the kids we talked to actually wanted to eat more vegetables. As a result, what started as a small project turned into a 118-page research paper.

Understanding the Scope of Hunger

We held a community-wide conference to share our findings. We found a number of issues that surprised us and changed the direction of our project. Official hunger rates in New Hampshire were actually very low. Only about 7% of the population is actually classified as "food insecure" (doesn't know where their next meal is coming from). About 10% of the Vermont population is officially food insecure. But these statistics don't accurately reflect the sky-high housing prices in the two states. The government statistics are based on an outdated formula developed in the 1960s, which looks only at income and assumes that housing is relatively affordable (30%

or less of a family's total budget). In the Upper Valley, however, families regularly pay 50-60% of their total income toward housing. This leaves a disproportionately small amount for food, childcare, and amenities. We suspect that many more families do not know where their next meal is coming from, but are not classified as "food insecure" by the federal government and thus do not receive any food aid. (New Hampshire does not have a single state-sponsored food aid program. There are only federal and private programs.)

Pride, Stigma, and Discrimination

Even New Hampshire families who qualify for food stamps often don't receive them: Out of all the people who qualify, only 46% actually receive food stamps (compared to 76% in Vermont). There are several possible explanations. One is that New Hampshire is a very rural state with comparatively little infrastructure, making it harder for people to physically sign up for or receive food stamps. Another is pride: Shopping with food stamps can lead to stigma and discrimination. Finally, the actual value of food stamps usually only makes a small dent in a hungry family's monthly food needs.

Private food banks and local food shelves have attempted to fill this gap. The New Hampshire Food Bank is a Catholic Charity and receives no state aid. It has a total of six employees, who all work very hard, but cannot fulfill the food needs for a majority of the state's hungry population. Smaller local food shelves in the Upper Valley include the LISTEN Center, the Haven, the Putney Food Shelf, the Claremont Soup Kitchen and the Hartford Food Shelf. We interviewed the directors of all of these, and toured the food banks in Barre, VT and Manchester, NH. Repeatedly, we heard that people who manage to make it out to food shelves are getting sufficient caloric intake, but they are still malnourished.

Gleaning can produce surprising results.

The Real Needs

Everyone we talked to in the nonprofit food sector said they had no problem getting bread. There are always enough local supermarkets and bakeries willing to donate their day-old goods. Almost none of these organizations put a limit on the number of times a family or individual could receive bread. What they lacked were healthier foods, which tend to be more expensive.

Families could get an occasional jar of peanut butter or can of tuna fish for protein, but produce and dairy were almost nonexistent.

What produce there was inevitably came out of a can due to storage limitations. When we surveyed the families who frequented the food shelves, 90% of them said they wanted to feed their children healthier foods but couldn't afford to do so. Local pediatricians told us that this has led to high levels of childhood diabetes, heart problems, fatigue, dizziness and lower academic achievement in school.

Managing the Harvest

Many local farmers do donate their excess produce to food shelves. But a majority of the food shelf directors said that most clients preferred "heartier" foods with "more calories" to vegetables like cucumbers or lettuce. The concern was to get as many carbohydrates as possible to prevent calorie deficit. Harried mothers and fathers who worked multiple jobs also didn't have time to cook preparation-intensive foods. It's easier to heat up ramen noodles than to prepare vegetable dishes. Also, many children were not used to the taste of plain vegetables, and parents could not afford the time or money to cook them into something else. As one national food relief organization told us, "No one eats their broccoli unless you put some cheese on top."

Our solution was to prepare the meals ourselves.

Finally, we considered serving food on-site, soup kitchen style. But many families indicated that this was inconvenient. It would limit our service to families with cars. Many people had inconsistent work schedules, and would have a hard time getting their entire family to an often-distant location for one meal. Most importantly, we wanted to encourage self-sufficiency as much as possible. We hoped families would be able to prepare and eat meals in their own homes.

Harvest, *cont'd. on p. 10*

Harvest for the Hungry, ***cont'd. from p. 9***

Our solution was to prepare the meals ourselves, then freeze them into quart-sized portions (about two servings). These individually frozen meals would be handed out at food shelves to regular clientele. This would utilize the food distribution system already in place, and integrate in healthy, full meals where there was once only Kraft Macaroni and Cheese.

Our first full cycle of gleaning-cooking-distribution occurred this past Wednesday. Three volunteers traveled up to Tunbridge Farm, in Tunbridge, Vermont, where the friendly owners helped us glean corn, kale, leeks, celery root and mustard greens. That night, 10 volunteers and one local caterer gathered together in the Dartmouth Hillel kitchen and prepared 130 servings of "harvest corn chowder" which thankfully ended up being delicious. We divided the chowder into quart-sized ziplock bags with attached labels that included our product line name, "Harvest Moon Meals," the ingredients and the name of the farm that donated the produce. We froze the meals for two days in the Dartmouth Dining Services freezers because they met commercial specifications for freezing and reheating food.

On Friday afternoon, I brought the meals over to the Haven, a local shelter and food shelf. Several clients were there shopping for food, and couldn't believe that the soup was actually for them. I got a letter this morning from one of them thanking me for bringing "tasteful nutrition" into his and his wife's dining room. I had been so focused on keeping all the pieces of the project together, I had forgotten about its actual impact.

Moving the Project Forward

I am writing this after returning from Fat Rooster Farm in Royalton, VT. Seven volunteers spent a beautiful Saturday afternoon gleaning eggplant, butternut squash, peppers and other goodies which we will make into a squash soup tomorrow evening. By the end of this harvest season, we hope to have run through this process six times, netting a total of about 1,000 servings of filling, tasty and healthy food for the Upper Valley's food shelf clients.

The author and her son.

This winter, when the main harvest season ends, we hope to expand our project to include outreach and education. We are working on a community cookbook of local foods that includes instructions on preparing tasty vegetables, simple recipes that include low-cost ingredients and fun-food activities for parents who want to promote nutrition to their children.

Kitchen prep work.

We also want to start an after-school club at a local, low-income elementary school with a focus on the importance (and fun!) of being healthy (hygiene, exercise and nutrition.) Next summer, the gleaning program will start up again, sponsored by the Environmental Studies Department at Dartmouth College.

It is my hope that by the end of next year's gleaning season, these various projects will have come together with local organizations to form an Upper Valley Food Security Coalition. Local hunger is not a problem that a few students can satisfactorily address. It is an issue that involves the whole community. In order to address it, the whole community must get involved. ❑

Letter from Texas...

Dear Community Works Journal,

I think this service-learning project will be of interest to your readers. One of our elementary schools in our district works directly with the Coppell, Texas community in a community garden. The school has a committee of students from all grades called the Green Team that take the leadership at their school for environmental service for school and community.

The most recent service-learning project there was entitled "Sweet Service." The kindergarten class last year planted sweet potatoes in the community garden and this year's class harvested the crop, weighed their sweet potatoes and crated them and took a field trip to the local food bank to deliver their goods to help feed the hungry.

We use the STARS model in our district with service-learning: S-Student Leadership, T-Thoughtful Service, A-Authentic Classroom Learning, R-Reflection, S- Substantive Partnership.

Lyn Baldwin
Service-Learning Coordinator
Coppell ISD –Coppell, Texas
mailto:lbaldwin@coppellisd.com

Leftover Lessons
Worm Farmers Get Hooked

by Eve Pranis

Eve is the Education Director for the National Gardening Association (NGA) and has written about many exemplary garden-related curriculum projects from across the country. She joins the pages of Community Works Journal *as a regular contributing editor, courtesy of our partnership with the National Gardening Association (www.garden.org).*

"Several years ago my sixth graders were exploring decomposition using 2-liter soda bottles as suggested in the book *Bottle Biology*. But their interest waned because the action was so slow," reports Denise Grap from Simi Valley, California. With a goal of helping her students discover that there was more than one way to digest a banana peel, Denise invited the city's waste management educator to offer them a worm's eye view.

After learning about worms and their penchant for trash, Denise's students tried housing a handful of red wigglers in a dishpan with air holes, then watched what they could do with lunchroom leftovers. "After seeing how quickly worms digested our waste, the kids wondered whether our school could actually make a dent in the waste that ended up in our local landfill," says Denise. The class was determined to uncover information on worm needs, preferences, and food capacity. Questions that they could explore through ethical investigations—how worms respond to light, for instance—these young scientists answered themselves. Other insights came through book and Internet research. But students didn't necessarily hang on the 'experts' judgments." The kids learned that worms will eat half their weight in food every day," says Denise. "By carefully measuring results in our own worm farm, they discovered that they could only eat half their weight every two days." Through further research, students inferred that their high-fiber, relatively low-moisture worm fare took longer to digest.

Seven pounds of worms soon turned into 21. Students wondered if they could create a vermiculture system to recycle all the lunchroom waste. After measuring the amount of compostable cafeteria leftovers produced each day (50 to 60 pounds), the class pondered how many worms they would need to process that trash.

"We decided that if we built five 2-cubic yard bins (based on a design from the local Waste Management Board), and fed each bin once a week, we would need 70 pounds of worms per bin," explains Denise. Realizing that this venture needed funding, students set up a recycling drive for cans, bottles, and paper to raise funds.

Proud worm farmers pose with their work.

"The students dove into math as they evaluated bin designs, figured the amount and cost of lumber they'd need, and created scale models of 4-foot-wide by 6-foot-long by 1-foot-deep bins from cardboard," explains Denise. Impressed by the students' ambitions, an area worm farm business offered to donate all the worms and a food grinder, and to consult with students on the project.

"Science, of course, was at the core..."
Denise Grap, Simi Valley Teacher

Before leaving the vermiculture program to the next group of sixth graders, Denise's students created a three-pronged mission statement to guide their successors: reduce waste, educate others, and create a business to support the garden and deliver a percentage of produce to local food banks.

Cultivating Mentors

The sixth graders who inherited the worm bins had the charge of determining how to teach the rest of the student body to participate in the program. Members of five collaborative groups developed lessons covering three areas: exploring worm biology, creating a mini worm farm from liter bottles, and participating in the cafeteria waste program. After writing scripts for each type of lesson, the wise worm groups engaged each K-6 class. "The kids did a great job with interactive biology lessons, covering everything from worm responses to the environment (light, touch, moisture) to reproduction," says Denise. For example, the young teachers might ask a group, "Do you think worms have eyes?" Next, they would

Worm Farmers, *cont'd. on p. 30*

Understanding the World's Interconnectedness: Stories from a Sustainable School

by Jen Cirillo

In the Spring 2000 issue of Community Works Journal*, we interviewed Erica Zimmerman and Anne Bijur of Shelburne Farms about a grassroots initiative called "Vermont Education For Sustainability" (EFS). This initiative created a network of organizations that share a desire to connect students to the places where they live, with the ultimate goal of longterm survival for the planet and all its inhabitants. Together they promoted and eventually achieved the addition of two important state education standards: Sustainability and Understanding Place. This work continues with the Sustainable Schools Project (SSP), a multi-layered approach to school improvement and place-based learning. Champlain Elementary School in Burlington has become a working model for the Project as it aims to help students develop a sense of place, the feeling that they can make a difference, and an understanding of the interconnectedness of the world.*

Seeding the Living Machine with new life.

The Learning Center is buzzing. A group of Kindergarten students gather around the school's "Living Machine" — a model water ecosystem. Rita, a fourth grader, is leading a "workshop" to teach the younger children about the importance of the living machine and what discoveries they may make if they take a closer look. After they make their observations she prompts the students, "Does anyone have any questions?"

"Why are all the tanks connected?" a student queries. Rita, having not only observed that the tanks are interconnected and that this mimics other systems in nature, takes the idea a step further and explains, "Well, in a human community people work together to make life better, and in the Living Machine everything works together to make life."

> VERMONT STANDARD 3.9—SUSTAINABILITY:
> *Students make decisions that demonstrate understanding of natural and human communities, the ecological, economic, political, or social systems within them, and awareness of how their personal and collective actions affect the sustainability of these interrelated systems.*

By sustainability we mean "improving the quality of life for all—economically, socially, environmentally—for current and future generations." To be meaningful, such far-reaching goals must be arrived at by consensus. How can we decide how to improve the life of a community (whether ecological, economic or social) without taking into account all of that community's needs? The Sustainable Schools Project (SSP) emerged from an approach to teacher professional development founded on a vision that comes directly from the school and the community. We begin by consulting with school faculty, facilitating whole group decision-making, creating a common dialogue and identifying shared goals and methods. The Project helps schools use Sustainability as the "integrating context" for curriculum, community partnerships and campus ecology. Overall, the SSP aims to increase students' learning and civic engagement, specifically focusing on creating a sense of place, feeling like one can make a difference, and understanding the interconnectedness of the world.

As the first Sustainable School, Champlain Elementary School in Burlington, Vermont aims to improve student learning and civic engagement through integrative curriculum, community-based and service-learning projects. Using sustainability as the integrating context engages this K-5 urban elementary school in inquiry and practice to improve not only the school's quality of life but the quality of life in Burlington. Within the framework of science and social studies, Champlain's teachers are developing this concept through standards-based curriculum, learning activities and assessments.

Developing a Curriculum Map

In the spring of the 2002-2003 school year, SSP staff helped Champlain teachers to articulate a curriculum map showing how the "big ideas" or concepts of sustainability build from grade to grade. The teachers noted that this was just what they needed to better develop their units and to know what skills and knowledge the upcoming students had been taught

and practiced. During the 2003 summer curriculum planning, teachers began brainstorming in grade level teams and sharing with the whole group their essential questions, topics, products and performances, skills to practice and potential resources/community partners. Through this process they refined their units and themes, creating a year-long K-5 curriculum map aimed at helping students achieve the school-wide goals of academic achievement, attainment of state standards, and civic engagement.

In kindergarten through second grade, the focus is on developing a sense of place—an awareness of the natural and human communities around us—and the cycles that guide the local environment. The idea behind this is, the better we know our community and care about it, the better we will be able to take care of it in the future.

I found something! The essential question, "What connections and cycles shape our Lake Champlain Ecosystem?" guides this student's inquiry into a local wetland.

At-risk students who participated in a summer gardening and literacy camp are leading their class in their rate of reading improvement; their parents have also become more involved and confident in the school community.

In the second grade, student explorations of the cycles and systems of nature gain depth, relevance, and excitement. Observation and action become the processes of learning, and the school yard becomes the context. Whether creating a school yard map or drawing the living machine's resident turtle, these young children are demonstrating increased focus and detailed understanding. As a class explains to visitors how they produce the turtle's food by growing worms in their classroom compost bin, they use impressive fluency and vocabulary. Their teachers are especially excited to see these skills carry over to reading. At-risk students who participated in a summer gardening and literacy camp are leading their class in their rate of reading improvement; their parents have also become more involved and confident in the school community. Teachers are including all levels in the more complex activities previously reserved for advanced reading groups. They can justify the extra time these projects require because they now include literacy strategies in all subjects, and because their work on sustainability has improved their curriculum design. As one teacher said, "Now that we figured out our essential questions, I can tell which activities will be most meaningful and important to learning."

For example, in first and third grade rooms, the SSP has inspired greater use of local place both as the focus of learning and as the connector of science and literacy. Teachers use their sustainability themes to choose fiction and nonfiction literature, then partner those lessons with outdoor studies. They use that learning to inspire student work in writing and art, which can then be used for assessment. The first grade's traditional calendar studies now include school yard ecology as a foundation for stewardship. The third grade's curriculum about diverse cultures now features local cultures, animal species and geologic history. This place-based focus has increased student engagement as well as efficiency; teachers now have time to partner with community organizations on several projects. As a community partner put it, "The children are getting a physical sense of place, not just related to a book or laboratory. We get out and see and walk the watershed. They ask questions such as: Why does the watershed look the way it does? How has it been altered by human development? Why does the watershed run right through many houses? I want the children to get out into the field to experience the watershed in physical ways, to measure it, get wet, take chances."

In fourth and fifth grade students learn about the forces that shaped their community, explore local systems that meet the community's needs, and try to develop ways to make those systems more sustainable. Students begin every year by making a Quality of Life index, where they prioritize what a community should seek to achieve. Class work then focuses on topics from community design and history to wetlands and geology. Each year the culminating service-learning projects address those topics and the Quality of Life index. Some re-

Sustainable School, *cont'd. on p. 14*

Sustainable School, ***cont'd. from p. 13***
cent projects have led to schoolwide efforts such as school yard habitat enhancement, cafeteria composting, and community learning events for their families. The Legacy Card, created by Champlain teachers as a prototype for a city-wide project, brings students' families into local organizations and businesses to learn about their contributions to the community. A PTO member even suggested that the principal include "essential questions" from sustainability units in the weekly newsletter, "so we families can have something to talk about at the dinner table!"

Sharing information about the Livable Wage Campaign: one of several local organizations helps teachers better understand topics and issues of sustainability.

As part of the Healthy Neighborhoods/Healthy Kids Project (a partnership with Vermont Forum on Sprawl), fourth and fifth grade students are actively engaged in making their neighborhood a better place to live. Students created a "report card" to assess their community on health and safety, graded their neighborhoods, and made presentations to the mayor, city council, department heads, and to the community on their priorities. One student asked "How much money are we going to have to earn to get some more speed bumps?" She now sees herself as part of a larger community and someone who can make an impact.

> **"They have great ways of looking at things, a way of broadening your thinking about how to think about sustainability or teach it that can bring you to a place you might not have thought of."**
>
> ***Betsy Patrick, 3rd grade teacher***

Currently in its second year, Champlain continues to experience the positive outcomes of SSP: increased collaboration among teachers, curricular integration, more parental/community involvement, students' awareness of their community, and increased sense of school/community and caring. This "big idea" of sustainability has brought together all teachers and administrators in the school. Teachers between grade levels and subjects (i.e., music, gym, guidance counselors) are collaborating more on all focus areas of the SSP. New teaching teams have become effective. Teachers are inspired and building on each other's successes with community partnerships.

> **"You know it's working when in May you're already looking forward to next year."**
>
> ***Nancy Zahniser, Champlain Principal***

Strategies for Improving Teaching, Learning and Community Engagement

A schoolwide focus on sustainability provides a common community-based context for improving teaching, learning and community engagement. The Sustainable Schools Project aims to create a schoolwide approach that is flexible and attractive to every school community's needs, strengths and challenges. It brings together proven, innovative strategies from both school reform and sustainable communities, which include:

A. Sustainability as Integrative Context

Sustainability connects
- topics within a curriculum;
- the classroom and students with the community; and
- academics with crucial global and local situations.

Teachers have found it inclusive of all disciplines and functions of the school and society, especially because it emphasizes the understanding of connected systems.

B. Professional Development in Concept-based Curriculum

By shifting the priority of curriculum planning from "covering topics and activities" to the concepts of sustainability, SSP strengthens teachers' ability to:
- make connections with community;
- teach for deeper understanding of the skills and knowledge demanded by the Vermont Framework of Standards; and
- distill the "curriculum stew" of the 21st century.

Its community-based model of professional development helps teachers use the concepts to integrate curricula and design for understanding rather than coverage.

4/5th grade students wrote a cookbook for common food shelf ingredients as part of their sustainability service-learning projects.

Local community partners lead the teacher-participants in an immersion into

local sustainable development efforts, modeling place-based learning opportunities as they communicate the principles, issues and strategies of sustainability. The teachers work to see their curriculum through a lens of sustainability, identifying and enhancing its community and interdisciplinary connections.

"Schools are usually in their own arena and the community in its own, and the two don't blend. [SSP] has created that integration. Students are out in the community learning and are having a community presence. [SSP] has definitely focused learning at Champlain on local community. That's huge."

Comment by a community partner

C. Collaborative Leadership–Schools as Sustainable Communities

The SSP addresses teachers as leaders of effective school change and models sustainable communities' essential practice of participatory decision-making. The project involves embedded professional development, using study groups, mentoring and other forms of colleague support to give teachers opportunities to understand, coordinate, and embrace school improvement initiatives.

The SSP further advances the roles of teachers as leaders for decision-making through its participatory priority-setting and planning process. Teachers in study groups lead the process to focus their school's efforts on sustainability and literacy. At the same time, the project encourages the participation of all branches of the school community, from parents and students to custodial staff and administrators to community members. It incorporates community meetings for brainstorming, learning, prioritizing, planning, and celebrating. Diverse teams shape the focus and structure of the school's implementation of sustainability, leading to diverse and broad participation in project leadership, decision-making, and assessment of achievement.

Teachers practice gleening in Burlington's Intervale as part of their investigation into food security and systems.

D. Community Partnerships

Involving local educational organizations, government and business resources in sustainable schools such as Champlain Elementary has enriched the learning of teachers, students and parents, while encouraging community engagement. Community partners join with school teams to shape the curriculum and community action projects through which students, teachers and parents engage in efforts toward sustainability. From lessening the school's negative ecological impacts to working for community change, these service-learning projects enhance the curriculum and provide for community connections. The project contracts with key community partners identified by the school teams, and awards mini grants to teachers to implement these projects.

Parent volunteers take students out to assess their neighborhoods for health and safety.

The SSP, through the Place-Based Education Evaluation Collaborative (PEEC), has gained valuable information about its emerging model. Findings show the development of SSP has been flexible enough to accommodate shifts and changes, which has built its staying power. One teacher explained that "Teachers have evolved in their thinking about what they are teaching." Other process strengths include:

• long-term involvement, with SSP becoming part of the school's culture;

• embedded professional development in content and pedagogy with continual support, role modeling, and one-on-one coaching; and

Sustainable School, *cont'd. on p. 26*

Teaching History Connected to Place: The Northern Campaign

Community Works Journal *recently interviewed Lois Michaud and Tracie Surridge, two of three teachers who designed an interactive and exciting American History unit at Burke Town School. Margaret Morse, the third teacher, was unable to attend. We were interested in learning about how the teachers collaborated to design this unit. They tell an exciting story. It was clearly evident that they had the strong support and encouragement of their Principal, Sonny Davis.*

Students atop Mount Defiance as they retrace the Northern Campaign.

Teaching History Connected to Place

Three years ago, Margaret Morse and Lois Michaud—fifth and sixth grade teachers at Burke Town School in the Northeast Kingdom—taught a unit on the Revolutionary War. "What we learned was that it was too much to do in the time we had to cover everything. The unit had no depth," explained Lois. That year, the two teachers took their students on a field trip to Fort Ticonderoga and Mount Independence. They felt the experience was great but again "it was too much, too rushed." The two teachers asked themselves what they could do to make a Revolutionary War unit have more of an impact without being superficial. After taking a course with Mark Skelding of FoodWorks called "School yard Habitat," they began to focus on a connection to place—a connection fostered by their membership in the Vermont Rural Partnership. This led them to the idea of concentrating on the Northern Campaign of the Revolutionary War, much of which happened in Northern Vermont and adjacent upper New York state. Burke Town's Principal, Sonny Davis, suggested tying the unit into the watersheds, so that it made sense geographically. The waterways they looked at were in Maine, Quebec, Vermont (Lake Champlain) and New York.

Discovering New Views of American History

On a previous trip the teachers had taken, the teachers had a speaker who gave an entirely different view of Benedict Arnold from the one they had traditionally been taught. "So we started by buying Kenneth Roberts' books." (*Rabble in Arms* and *Arundel* were suggested by a Middlebury college professor who volunteers at one of the historic sites.) Then they bought nonfiction books on the Northern Campaign and read everything they could get their hands on during the summer of 2002. Books such as *Saratoga* by Ketchum and *Benedict Arnold* by Jean Fritz corroborated the information they had read in fiction books. "We got on line and started searching for books we could use with the kids. We asked at every workshop, we bought them everywhere, then raised money to pay for them." Margaret and Lois got Tracie Surridge on board in the fall, when she joined the 5/6 team.

Planning the Field Trip

"During an in-service day in October, we told Sonny we were thinking of a two-day field trip, and wanted to check out places and mileage. We knew we wanted to go to Maritime Museum. We went on a professional development day in Southern Vermont to explore possibilities. We went to Bennington, Saratoga, Mt. Independence, Fort Ticonderoga, and Fort William Henry.... We scouted out places to stay with 45 5th and 6th graders and 16 chaperones. We started to develop a time line for the whole project to make the trip as chronological as possible, which was tricky." The teachers got on-line and saw that the Maritime Museum does a "Battle of Valcour" talk, and that they had a replica of Benedict Arnold's boat, the *Philadelphia*. They also spent extra money to hire reenactors to guide the students at the other historic sites. "We were at school nights and weekends putting in hours writing the unit and searching on line to find hotels, prices for admission, and coordinating the whole trip. We knew that knowing the history

Students work on their project displays.

was important; then we had to plan the trip. We created the unit to prepare the kids for the trip. We came up with our essential questions, and the standards that would address them." Margaret and Lois had learned about interactive history when they took a course offered by reenactors from The Living History Association. Later, Margaret and Lois brainstormed with Tracie about these ideas.

A Seven-Week Unit

"We began with conflict—what does it look like, feel like, what are the consequences?" To make it real to their students, the teachers invited some eighth grade girls to do a role-play about conflict, with students in the class witnessing and then discussing what they observed, and relating what they were discussing to their personal experiences of conflict. "We were constantly trying to make it real, make it breathe for the kids. For background, we gave them some information on Colonial times, and on the French and Indian War, and talked about the dilemma of whether or not we should fight Britain. We did a simulation on early taxation (using chocolate kisses instead of tax dollars). They understood the anger that was driving people. We wanted to get the issues into their heads. We portrayed both sides throughout the whole unit."

The Continental Congress Reenactment

The teachers then introduced an interactive lesson on the Continental Congress. "The kids did it. Each student had an identity. They got one of several roles to play—Loyalist, Patriot, or Neutralist" (most were the latter). This work gave them a time line in which to talk about the acts—and conflicts—that led to the Revolution. They also had to talk about Roberts Rules, motions, and points of order; the teachers used the opportunity to relate what they were learning about the Continental Congress to their own Town Meeting. "They set up chairs to simulate the meeting room, and the students had to argue their cases," according to Lois. "At the end of each reenactment they reflected about what they could have done better. The students themselves realized, 'We should have been better prepared.' They had their arguments in line by the next reenactment. And they voted without knowing the real outcome of the actual Continental Congress in advance."

Students present their work and learning to Vermont Rural Partnership teachers.

Students prepare colonial meal for their pen pals.

Fitting the Unit into a Demanding Curriculum

When asked how they fit their study into a demanding schedule that concentrated on science, math and literacy, their response was that their curriculum alternates blocks between science and social studies, "so we don't have to water it down. A whole block is spent on one or the other. Everything we did except math was immersed in this unit." Urged by Principal Sonny Davis to involve the community, the teachers introduced "Pen Pals": Students had to write three letters to pen pals about what they were learning—a unique and interesting connection to local community members who provided an "authentic audience" for the students' work. The students also had to write a narrative based on their person in a real setting. They constantly read and prepared for the simulation, and they wrote responses to the literature they were reading. Finally, they had to choose one area of specialization about the Northern Campaign to research and present for a final project. Meanwhile, "we were constantly reading, doing read-alouds of other books and diaries of historical/fictional people to give the students a sense of what life was like at the time." The teachers used journals to help students understand how the foreign troops felt coming to the great Northern Woods, and Lois read parts of *Arundel* and other books from the Maritime Museum.

Involving the Community

The kids were very excited about the pen pals. To encourage community members, "we put out 'wanted' posters at Town Meeting and the Post Office, asking for pen pals who would

Teaching History, *cont'd. on p. 18*

Teaching History, ***cont'd. from p. 17***
be willing to write three or four letters and come to our picnic, which was going to be the culminating activity." To show their pen pals what they had learned, students had photo albums and post cards. The teachers found photos on-line and collected postcards for these albums. "Every night on the field trip the students had questions to answer that went with the pictures. The chaperones had instructions about what was expected. The students shared these photo albums and their projects with their pen pals at the culminating picnic."

Dividing the Teaching Tasks

Community Works Journal asked about how they divided up the tasks in designing and conducting a unit like this. "We organized ourselves by dividing in halves or thirds during teaching." Lois and Tracie gave students the big picture of the sequence of events as well as the climate, transportation networks, and settlement patterns. Margaret taught the mapping. She went on-line and found maps, downloading and printing them, talking about the campaigns and associated places and events. She used these maps to create a Northern Campaign Atlas. Students had a list and rubric for the map they each created using other maps as resources. Lois used the same maps as overheads, talking about the events on the rivers. "I had to be an expert on this stuff or I couldn't be enthusiastic," exclaimed Lois. According to Tracie, "Their enthusiasm was contagious—it made me want to learn."

When it was time to teach events, Tracie worked with the students on their pen pal letters and their narratives. Lois covered the sequence of events of the Northern Campaign, and Margaret worked on the individual projects where students each chose one subject about the campaign to explore from a list she provided. They had 17 choices of project style (poster, story, poem, diagram, oral presentation, etc.). "The students really became expert. They presented to the class, and could work alone or with a partner.... Our standards were high, and we're hard markers, but they all got at least a B. The kids were totally engaged. So much so that when we went on the trip, the kids at the Maritime Museum began chiming in when the museum person started to lecture, and eventually they took over the lecture. At every historic site the teachers kept hearing how well prepared the students were. Comments that students made after the trip were, 'Now I can picture it. I was there. I stood where they stood.' They were moved by being there. They could visualize and feel it. We did a lot of kinesthetic stuff: We stormed the fort (arranged in advance), and formed the hollow square. The next day we went to Mount Independence and Hubbardton Battlefield, having read *The Captive at Pittsford Ridge*. They saw where the battle took place, and where the troops had to retreat, climbing up and over the ridge." For students who could not go on the field trip for some reason, the teachers arranged a "virtual" field trip using computers. "They saw pictures, read about it, and did it in the same sequence that we were doing on the trip." For easy access, the teachers had put icons on the computer screens at school for the students.

The culminating picnic was a learning experience too. "The kids had authentic venison stew and learned to cook colonial foods. We got it all out of an early Colonial cookbook—cornbread, corn chowder, brown bread and baked beans, cider, and pumpkin pudding." They also presented their projects to their pen pals. They had 45 minutes with their pals before lunch, and then had lunch with them, and could walk around and look at others' projects. "It was their time to shine," said Lois. "It was exhausting but satisfying."

The students weren't the only ones who will never forget this experience of living history. Their pen pals were really impressed: When the teachers did a pen pal reflection, "the pen pals all wanted it to last longer and volunteered to do it another year." ❑

"The Institute brought structure to an elusive concept. I came away with so much more than I anticipated and was touched to the core in a deeper sense!"

Holly McNeil, Teacher
Greensboro, North Carolina

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Creating A Sense of Place: Discovering the Stories in Our Own Backyards

by Wendy Oellers, M.Ed, BS

Wendy teaches at Gilford Elementary School in New Hampshire. Her award winning "Integrated Instructional Model" incorporates inquiry-based, interdisciplinary, and problem-based instruction. The Arts are integral parts of the learning process. Emphasis is placed on the development of a compassionate and democratic learning community.

In our transient society, too many students are growing up with little understanding of where they live or their impact on the environment. Today with the help of programs like CO-SEED, educators are venturing outdoors, beyond the traditional four walls of their classrooms, to create community laboratories. Students are observing first hand the many connections and stories that make up the history of their community. These experiences provide children opportunities to learn the geography, ecology, history, and other dynamics of the community. While outdoors, children observe, question and reflect on the natural and cultural history. These learning opportunities provide children with a sense of place, where they discover how they fit into the community. Whether it is exploring a nature trail, visiting historical landmarks, or interviewing members of a historical society, children are able to connect the many relationships that form and can impact a community.

For many teachers, the benefit of environmental or place-based activities is not the question why, but how? How can we justify taking time for activities outdoors, when we already are overburdened with curricular demands? I have my students for two years, beginning in second grade. I am responsible for meeting the academic demands for two different grades. Time is definitely a critical issue.

In my journey as a teacher and codeveloper of the Integrated Instructional Model, I have discovered a way to meet curricular responsibilities and have time for venturing into the outdoors. The key components are: 1. Creating essential questions that will guide our learning; 2. Integrating concepts and skills from across the disciplines; 3. Incorporating the Arts as vehicles of learning and to demonstrate of understandings. I work with grade level team members to identify state frameworks, topic areas, key concepts, and skills. Using post-it notes, we arrange and rearrange the notes until connections and a relevant sequence become apparent. Inherent to both our science and social studies curriculums is the concept of community. The essential questions are: What makes a community? How does diversity (or lack of it) impact community? How does change (or lack of it) impact community? From the scaffold of these questions, others are developed to link the children's learning for meaningful connections. Whether one is studying classification in biology, economy, geography, history or myriad of other fields, these three questions are exceptional ones for guiding learning.

In the beginning of our first year together, my class develops an understanding of what makes our classroom a community and how we can show both respect and responsibility. Rituals and rules are established as well as an understanding of the similarities, differences, and connections we have with each other. The classroom community extends to the school community and beyond. By the second week, our class begins its exploration of the many connections and interrelationships in the community outside our classroom. Venturing weekly into the woods, the children begin a journey of discovery that continues throughout the school year.

During our daily literacy block, we develop centersand present materials that provide both information and the practice of relevant skills that enrich and support our current unit of study. For example, during a unit on animals in winter, one center shows pictures of various New Hampshire mammals

On the trail of discovery in Gilford.

with a set of accompanying riddles. Children read the "clues" and determined which animal would match the riddle. Once finished, the challenge is to create a new riddle. A kit of pelts, borrowed from the State Fish and Game Department, gives the children opportunity to graph and measure. A crossword puzzle gives clues, which send the children scurrying for the classroom dictionary to find the correct spelling for cache, omnivore and other key terms. Working collaboratively, the

Backyards, *cont'd. on p. 30*

Museum Workshops Come Alive

by Susan Bonthron

The Flow of History project is working with educators and historians to use the local history of watershed towns to help American history live and breathe for students, educators and community members in the Connecticut River Valley and beyond. One of the project's main goals is to help teachers become knowledgeable about primary resources, including historic sites, town hall records, and museum collections. Susan spent two days with a group of educators as they explored a local mill and later listened to historians describe how they use primary documents such as maps, letters, and town records in their research. Such workshops help us recognize that teachers need the same type of hands-on history experiences they wish to create for their students.

On an unseasonably chilly day in early October, a group of educators from schools in Peacham, Barnet, Danville and Burke met with Peggy Pearl of the Fairbanks Museum for a tour of Ben Thresher's Mill in Barnet, Vermont. The tour was the morning part of a "Museum Workshop" day organized by Lynn Talamini, a coordinator for the Flow of History project.

The Mill as a Window on History

Known locally as "Ben's Mill," the structure we walked through has had a long history of continuous occupancy that closely mirrors the changing economic and social landscape of the region, making it an excellent resource for the study of local history. Peggy Pearl, armed with informative handouts that she distributed to the teachers, told her listeners about the building's original occupant, Alexander Jack, a Scotsman who had had experience in the Lowell textile mills of Massachusetts. Jack bought the site of an old saw mill tract located next to the Stevens River in 1870. Jack built the current structure as a "dye and print works" for the woolen industry then flourishing in Northern Vermont. Operating the mill from 1872 to 1887, Jack developed patents for dying wool right on the sheepskin, and spinning moisture out of the skin with a "hydro-extractor." The second floor of the mill was used for textile printing, and was plastered to keep dust from entering the room. Traces of the lathe and plaster can still be seen.

A Diverse Enterprise

The mill changed hands and purposes a number of times after Jack died in 1887, according to Peggy. It was a cider mill with a wooden screw-drive cider press from 1887 to 1893, and then a wagon and woodworking shop with a blacksmith forge as well. James Judkins, a wheelwright, carpenter, cooper and blacksmith, purchased the mill in 1893, and his sons Fenton and Donald operated the mill as partners when James died in 1900. From 1905 until 1947, Fenton was sole proprietor of the woodworking shop, and rebuilt the water power system in 1911. A round penstock funneled water into a horizontal turbine that achieved up to 30 horsepower. As electric milking machines came into use, the mill became an "auxiliary power station" to provide an extra boost at milking time. By 1938, the turbine ran a drill press, a band saw, a joiner, a planer and a metal lathe. Fenton made water tubs, snow rollers, wagon bodies and traverse sleds, and also repaired farm implements and wagons. Parts of old wagons, sleds and barrels are still visible on the mill floor and walls, evidence of the mill's rich history.

Hiram Allen illustrating his mill's workings for workshop participants.

The Need to Preserve

Ben Thresher bought the mill in 1947, and added a few more machines. He also used a tractor's engine to power the mill in times of low water. Ben charged 25 cents per bushel for pressing cider, or took apples in payment. He sold the mill to Laurance Rockefeller in 1978, who intended to move the entire structure to the Billings Farm but later changed his mind. The mill was bought by its current owner, Hiram Allen, several years afterward. Hiram still visits the mill daily. He showed us a number of machines that he and others have cleaned and restored, and led us into the basement to show us the penstock, turbine, and many belts that power the machines

on the floor above. He and Peggy talked about the need to raise money for the mill's restoration, in which they are both involved. According to Hiram, "We're going for the dam and need all the local support we can get." Rebuilding the dam contains its own complex dilemma about water use. While we were at the mill, Barnet teacher Alicia Hingston told us about a unit she had created with her students called the "Stevens River Watershed Unit." With local historian and writer Beth Dugger, she is now in the process of writing a new unit on "Ben's Mill and the River." Alicia and her students are pondering the question, "How will people blend their concerns about the river, the environment, and people's needs to preserve history?"

Westward to the Prairie

During lunch at Peacham School, Peacham Historical Society President Lorna Quimby spoke to us about the theme of Movement and Settlement in the Peacham area. She spoke of the first settlers who came to northern Vermont from Hadley, Massachusetts in the early 18th century. Prior to their arrival, the area had mainly served as a "throughway" for Native Americans on their way to their summer campgrounds along the Connecticut River in Newbury. Lorna explained how much we could learn from examining listers' records in the Town Hall archives. The land was only taxed after it was cleared, so the records give an idea of how long it took the settlers to clear their parcels. The entire wealth of these early settlers consisted of animals, clocks, and whatever money they had in the bank. Lorna went on to tell us how settlers pushed on to the middle west, a journey that became much easier once the railroad arrived in 1851. Families moved together and lived in "soddies" on the prairie, lured by advertisements for the Midwest's "wonderful climate." Now computers and the ability to "telecommute" is once again bringing an influx of people to Peacham.

Roxanna's Children

After lunch, we adjourned to the Peacham library, where Lynn Bonfield, archivist and author of *Roxanna's Children*, told us about her study of the movement and settlement of local figure Roxanna Brown Walbridge Watts and her descendants. Lynn used primary resources such as letters and diary entries of this early 19th century Vermont farm family to trace and record their lives and movement, following family members as far as California. Building on the discussion of primary resources, Lynn mentioned what a rich source of information lay in the records of the railroad depots that kept track of what got shipped during the Civil War and later. But Lynn found that diaries and letters were the richest vein to mine. According to Lynn "literate women wrote in diaries and letters about the social and domestic life in their homes and communities." Roxanna's oldest daughter got married and "went west," never to see her family again. Letters to and from home became her only connection with them. Another of Roxanna's daughters who was not a scholar decided to pursue work at the Lowell textile mills, and her letters home paint a vivid picture of life there. The Gold Rush lured another daughter's betrothed to California. Lynn's careful work as an archivist enabled her to piece together a living history of one family's movement and settlement patterns, now shared in her book.

A Visit to a Local Barn

To cap the day's activities, the group walked from the library to a large barn up the road, where two Peacham elementary students, Rene Joly and Michael Fickes, who had been part of a study of local barns, led us on a tour of the Fickes' barn. Stan Fickes, Michael's father, filled in some details about the property and helped us trace local history in the patterns of use still evident in the huge barn's structure. At the end of the day, we felt full of new knowledge and eager to share lessons, ideas and resources at our follow-up meeting.

Lynn Bonfield, archivist and author during her workshop.

Finding Aids and Resources

In November, the same group of teachers was treated to a rich day of resource sharing. We met at the Kitchel Center for the Study of the Northeast Kingdom (of Vermont), a new resource library at the Fairbanks Museum established in memory of Douglas B. Kitchel. The Center, as we learned from Patricia Schwartz, Director of Reference Services, "provides a cen-

Museum Workshop, ***cont'd. on p. 22***

Museum Workshop, ***cont'd. from p. 23***

tral clearinghouse for information and studies pertaining to the Northeast Kingdom's history and heritage; its natural history and ecology; and its economic, political and social character."

Patricia spoke to us about the importance of an organized *finding aid*, a catalog that is the end product of organizing an archival collection. The finding aid is an ongoing process in an archival collection to which new records are still being added. We discussed the difference between primary resources (diaries, letters, town records) and secondary resources (history books, compilations of records collected by others, town histories, school yearbooks, sources "not written by the person him/herself"). Some of the resources we learned about included rolls of soldiers (during the Revolutionary War and others); street directories that tell who lived where, their wives, children and occupations, put out in booklet format; insurance maps indicating what buildings were made of (e.g., stone, wood, brick, etc.); and vital records (births, marriages and deaths, or as record buffs quip, "Hatches, Matches and Dispatches.")

What Public Records Offer

Lorna Quimby followed Patricia's presentation with an introduction to public records, noting that because Peacham had had no fires, it had complete records dating back to "day one." Lorna spoke about the value of land records containing information about the buyer and seller; these let you see "who's moving in and who's moving out" of an area. Copies of wills are valuable for showing what kind of wealth people possessed (and what counted as wealth, such as clocks, watches, and animals). Original birth certificates contain the names of parents and where they were born, again a valuable resource for studying migration and settlement patterns.

The Temperance Movement was an interesting phenomena to study. For farmers trying to survive in a harsh climate, distilling potatoes and shipping bottles was much more cost effective than shipping the potatoes themselves. Once or twice a year, a store owner would bring bottles of liquor he'd accepted in trade to the city to sell, and while there he would note what the townspeople were buying, and stock up with the "latest in fashion." Other sources Lorna mentioned included, an 1858 county map, showing property owners' names; deed ,which can help trace a property's owners back through time; school records; town records (important in tracing families you can't trace any other way, such as ones without property.) These include barn records and grand lists, and chattel mortgages, business directories and almanacs.

Maps, Lawyers, and Water Rights

After Lorna and lunch downstairs at the Museum, we returned to Kitchel Center where we heard from Howard Reed, a formidable expert on maps and map reading, and the rich history you can glean from these treasures. According to Howard, the most desirable farmland used to be up in the hills, where the soil was better, though thinner. Later, the soil washed down and bottomland became better to farm. People also built on hills because it was healthier (malaria and flooding made bottomland less desirable). When the railroads came, centralizing shipping and markets, towns built up around junctions, and these were usually in the valleys as well. Howard also talked about the importance of water in Vermont: Mills and water determined settlement patterns because virtually any falling water was an opportunity to build a mill. This also led to the prevalence of lawyers in the state who were employed to argue about water rights! Bridges were difficult to build and were therefore avoided, and so small hamlets that might be geographically close were often separated by lack of bridges. Howard helped us see the interesting interconnections between the geophysical features in the landscape and the historical patterns they influenced.

Teacher Created Resources

At the end of the day, the teachers around the table shared various resources they have used and would recommend to others. They also discussed some of the projects they have been involved with and the resources they have been using. These projects included a Burke School unit "The Northern Campaign" (see p. 16). Additional work of Flow teachers can be found at: www.vermontruralpartnership.org/.

Provided with new and extensive information about primary resources, the teachers and librarians who attended this year's Museum Workshops can continue to expand their own knowledge and help their students explore rich veins of local history. Many thanks to the Flow of History, Lynn Talamini and Sarah Rooker, Peggy Pearl of the Fairbanks Museum, author Lynn Bonfield, historian Lorna Quimby, and Pamela Schwartz and Howard Reed of the Kitchel Center, for their worthwhile efforts on behalf of teachers and students. ❑

For more information, on The Flow of History contact Sarah Rooker (email: sarah.rooker@valley.net) or Fern Tavalin (email: tavalin@sover.net)or call (802) 463-4280. You may also visit: www.flowofhistory.org/.

As the documentation and sharing partner for the Flow of History project, Community Works is helping participating teachers and students tell their stories and share resources and curriculum. You may view a complete version of this article along with other related features at Community Works On-Line. GO TO: www.vermontcommunityworks.org/.

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Service-Learning Expands Across a High School's Curriculum

Community Works Journal *recently spoke with Ray Dumais of Goffstown High School, who is a graduate of last year's Community Works Institute on Service-Learning at Shelburne Farms. Ray reported significant progress in developing service-learning opportunities at his school. He added, "The Institute gave me all kinds of confidence. The variety of presenters was a nice cross section, and the site level work was really helpful."*

"The whole key is opening up options for students to learn outside the school, and to apply their knowledge to real-world situations, developing better citizens who have the habit of giving back to the community," says Ray Dumais. "Our principal, Mark Roth, is not just an administrator but also a visionary who believes in this kind of work." said Ray."

According to Ray, Cindy Burns' Junior/Senior biology class at Goffstown has begun a multigenerational project at the county nursing home. They are studying the aging process and different physical and mental challenges of old age. They will visit the nursing home several times to socialize with the elders, interview them, play games with them and observe. The students keep a journal and engage in regular reflective sessions, answering questions such as "What did we do?" "What do we keep and what do we redesign?" During another visit, they will talk to the nurses about what to look for in identifying physical and mental challenges. At the end they will compile all the information and give a presentation to the class. Cindy and Ray met with the nursing home director, the director of volunteers, and the activities director to talk about how the partnership could be expanded beyond a single project; they discussed various ways that the high school population could get involved with the nursing home residents.

Reana Reidy's multigrade Spanish class.

Another multigenerational project is slated to begin with AP history students in Eric Romein's class. They are starting a history club and plan to do projects with senior citizens at a nearby assisted living facility. Using Greg Sharrow's advice from the Summer Institute, they plan to "begin with local," interviewing the seniors about their lives and finding connections between local and national history. For example, they might interview a veteran of the Korean War, and discuss how the war affected families in the Goffstown area. Eventually the History Club students will join forces with students in the Video Club who will videotape their interviews. Once the History Club is formed, according to Ray, it will become a permanent yearly project.

Goffstown students read to and play games with the children of adults registering for local ESL classes.

Reana Reidy, teacher of an elective multigrade Spanish class at Goffstown, has two classes (a total of 60 students) involved in an Adult Education Center in the nearby community. They are assisting nonEnglish speaking folks in registering for ESL classes. The project is taking place in collaboration with the Mexican Consul. The students are also reading childrens' literature with the children of the immigrants, and leading other activities. The idea with each of these projects is to create ongoing partnerships rather than one-shot "projects." Ray, with the support of his principal, Mark Roth, is encouraging all the teachers involved to give presentations at faculty meetings after their projects have borne fruit.

To gain site level support for their service-learning work, Ray and guidance counselor John Webb presented to the school board the concept of community-based education (which at their site includes both service-learning and an internship program). Goffstown is currently undergoing a three-year school reform program through Brown University called "Breaking Ranks" that involves integrating the community in the school in more active ways. To increase awareness of service-learning in the community, Ray and John are speaking to business and civic organizations like the Rotary and Optimists Clubs, and the Main Street Association of local

Service-Learning, *cont'd. on p. 25*

Checking In with Participants from Summer Institute 2003

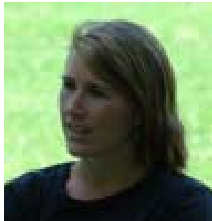
Institute participants at Shelburne Farms last July.

SEE Page 34 for 2004 Institute info

As we all know, it's a long way from the places where summer allows teachers to plan and dream for the coming year, back to reality as we find it. Unexpected pitfalls arise, even welcome suprises or changes, all of which can all in the way of the best laid teaching plans made in summer.

As we are periodically in touch with past participants of Community Works Summer Institute at Shelburne Farms, we hear a range of response, from outright success with exactly what was planned—to success with changes and adaptations to new circumstance. And, certainly, we do hear of the occasional plan that needed to be set aside for the future, for one good reason or another. In "Views from the Field", participants from last July's Institute share some of what has come about for them. We thank them for their dedication, great ideas, and for taking the time to share with our readers. Thanks to Tammi Quinn for her wonderful Institute photos.

Angie Barger, Program Coordinator
Association of Vermont Recylers
Montpelier, Vermont



We've seen five schools in Vermont establish a face for the "Trash on the Lawn Day" Service-Learning Project. They've used this high-profile waste audit to establish some baseline data for their school's solid waste management plan. Some teachers and students adopted the project as a springboard for the beginning of their school's own Environmental Club.

Overall, it's been amazing to see the organizational capabilities of students working together and with the greater school community to implement positive change. Participating schools have embraced us as an outside organization, and welcomed us as a community member. One of the most valuable pieces of the Summer Institute fell into place with each of these projects: networking with Vermont teachers and VISTA program members. These relationships have proven invaluable and three of our five participating schools happened because of a committed fellow Institute participant.

The biggest challenge, still, is sustaining the program. But, it seems more realistic that these projects can take root and be watered by the students, who seem to be taking ownership for the implementation of improved recycling programs in their schools. It's a huge job, and those who have taken it on are either brave or adventurous, or both with a little optimism mixed in.

Harwood Union High School's Environmentalist Club Members sorting trash at their Trash on the Lawn Day Service-Learning Project.

photo courtesy of Jeb Wallace-Brodeur/Times Argus

Our other big success involves students we work with through AVR's Youth Environmental Coalition who are planning the 7th Youth Environmental Summit for May 2004. One hundred high school students interested in being ambassadors of environmental action to their school will be selected from the pool of applicants to attend a three-day intensive leadership retreat. As now planned, Saturday's events will consist of a morning block of separate service activities that the participants work on for the community in which the retreat is being held. We'd plan to tie the ideas and visions of service-learning into this piece, so students have the tools to take S-L back to their teachers and school community. ❑

Mary Drexler, Teacher
Hamilton Terrace High School
Shreveport, Louisiana

Mary was assigned a start-up alternative class at the end of last year, with the mandate from her administrator to incorporate service-learning experiences for each of her students. Most of her students spend a large portion of their week in her class and so she is responsible for teaching the bulk of their academic subjects. Mary worked incredibly hard on her new curriculum last summer and checks in with us now.

All is well and much better than expected. I have fifty-seven students still enrolled in the service-learning program at Hamilton Terrace. We have accomplished a lot since we began in September this year; voter registration connected to civics and citizenship, campus clean-up, connected to a little science—mostly cooperative skills, working with elementary school students, working with nursing home residents—reading, playing games, talking, a food drive, etc. We spend time in the classroom promoting vocabulary and writing skills, citizenship and the five pillars of character. Through all of this I have tried to make an academic connection. Mostly, I think the biggest accomplishment is that there are still fifty-seven kids in the program and they come to school more often than before. They still gripe about doing something for nothing, but slowly I am seeing improvements. In December, we celebrated our successes with a dance. A local DJ has agreed to spin CD's. The spring semester is already under way—we've added another teacher to help with the new enrollment (alternative schools do not lack for students.) Wish me continued luck. ❑

Service-Learning, *cont'd. from p. 23*
businesses. Already they've had a few people call to ask for more information or help. They have one student going to the elementary school, so they are beginning to develop a partnership there. One result of that partnership is a Pen Pal project: First year teacher Emily West is coordinating with junior high teacher Lynn Ellis to develop a Pen Pal project between Goffstown 9th graders and 8th graders at a Lynn's school. This will help both groups practice good communication and writing skills, and will help the younger students in the transition from middle to high school.

We wish Ray and his colleagues at Goffstown the best, and look forward to following their stories in future issues of *Community Works Journal*. ❑

Jean Berthiaume, Social Studies Teacher
Ellen Berrings, Next Step Teacher
Harwood Union High School
South Duxbury, Vermont

Ellen and Jean, along with their colleague Mary Holden worked at the Institute on expanding service-learning schoolwide. We checked in and got a glimpse of their success.

In December, Harwood's Interact club organized community service opportunities within their district, under the banner of Operation Days Work, to raise money for three schools in Honduras. The students learned about these needy schools when working with area Rotarians. The Interact club, at last count eighty students strong, is a community service club that empowers students to consider and perform community service.

"I'm really excited about the response we got from the student body and the community. Many students have worked hard to do something good for their community and a community far away. I look forward to the next time students do ODW, having learned a lot the first time around," says Ellen Berrings, co-advisor to the HUHS Interact Club.

Branden Kasper, a sophomore at Harwood took a leadership role in organizing the event. He is a member of Interact and an elected representative to the student government. Kasper is also a student in a class entitled, Co/Motion. Co/Motion is an elective class taught by Jean Berthiaume. In this class students learn how to create the change they want to see in the world, but at the same time evaluating multiple perspectives regarding the impact of that change. Students learn valuable leadership and organization skills that empower them in the future. Kasper used the class to learn how to organize an event as large as ODW.

Harwood's students learned about Operation Day's Work (ODW) from students at Thetford Academy in Vermont. Academy students participate in a national ODW to learn about and select a particular third world community to support. Harwood's Interact club considered ODW as it is done at Thetford and other schools across the country, and chose to support the local Rotary members who were preparing to go to Honduras in January. Rotarians and teachers at Harwood have worked closely helping students organize to establish

Day's Work, *cont'd. on p.30*

What Students Can Do

by Jenna Harris

Jenna Harris is a senior taking Melissa Henrichon's Environmental Science class at Kimball Union Academy who lives in Marblehead, Massachusetts.

What can forty-two environmental science students and two teachers do to help deal with the ever-growing groundwater issues in a local community? More than most think. With the help of the Cornish Conservation Committee and homeowners in Cornish, New Hampshire the three environmental sciences classes at Kimball Union Academy have been working on a yearlong community mapping project to improve the condition of the ground water in the Cornish community.

Each class, which consists of about fourteen students and one teacher, began by reviewing the problems with the groundwater in Cornish and came to the following conclusions: First, the water supply in the Blow-me-down brook is fluctuating, and has resulted in several wells going dry over the past few years. Second, some of the ground water in the Cornish Flat area is being contaminated. This can cause many health problems and the contamination is very hard and expensive to clean up.

After defining the problems, we then set goals for ourselves, and assigned responsibilities to everyone in the class. One of our main goals was to think of ways to reduce the quantity of water used by Cornish over the summer months, when wells typically ran dry. We also wanted to obtain information about wells from as many homeowners as possible, so that we can create maps of the well data, because many of the wells and the water table are unmapped. We agreed as a class that by December we wanted to have most of our information gathered from the local homeowners, and by May we would have our final plan established and written down. So far, we have stuck to our December deadline.

The responsibilities were split up by giving everyone a different title so they knew what they needed to do. Some of these jobs included coordinator, organizers, contact people, visual artists and public speakers. For each step of the project, the work has been split up between these people according to their position, therefore everyone has something to do, and everything gets done. This has worked out to be a very efficient strategy.

A few of the things that we have organized so far in this project include a community forum for local homeowners, a visit to the farmers' market in Cornish to distribute questionnaires and explain our project to the community, and numerous contacts with the Cornish Conservation Committee. Representatives from each class went to each of these events, which students publicized and organized. A lot of valuable information was gathered at all of the events, and we are now in the process of deciding what to do with this information.

As a student, this project has been very exciting for us. It has varied the way that we learn material, because as we are informing others about groundwater and how it is used, we are learning about it as well. It allows us to go beyond the textbook to learn about science, which has proven to be a much better learning method for many students. Along with all these benefits, it is a great feeling for us to know that after all this work is done, a local community will hopefully benefit from what we have done. The project is an exciting part of the school year and we are all anxious to find out how far we can take it. ❑

Sustainable School, ***cont'd. from p. 15***

• help building school-community relationships.

SSP staff work closely with school faculty developing study circles to create a common dialogue about sustainability issues, integrating literacy and science, and a vision for the school. Professional development in sustainability content and skills is on-going, and includes introducing teachers to community resources and opportunities.

> **"The (SSP) staff are knowledgeable and excited and motivated….I can see a reason for teaching like this and I see that it can be built on grade by grade. In the end it's going to help the community if kids are aware of these things, so it's purposeful and I think education should be purposeful."**
>
> ***Debbie Lefebvre, First Grade Teacher***

Involving community partners in the school's work has been a win-win situation. It has provided an opportunity for the school to enhance educational opportunities for both teachers and students and for the community to see schools as an integral part of Burlington's future. Community partners have benefited from the relationship as well. They have collaborated with teachers through teacher internships to develop community learning opportunities that bring recognition to their programs and services.

Overall, the SSP is meeting the goals of the school and the community to help educate the next generation of active and engaged citizens with the skills to make decisions that will positively impact their own quality of life while preserving and protecting the social, economic, and environmental resources for the future. ❑

Who Needs You?

by Cynthia Parsons

While a high school student in a farm community, Cynthia did local community service, and during WWII, folded bandages for the Red Cross. She reflected on the activity in an English composition assignment. During her fourteen years as a teacher in public and private schools, she directed service-learning activities for all of her students. She is a former editor of the Christian Science Monitor, *founder of SerVermont and the author of* Seeds: Some Good Ways to Improve Schools*, and* Serving to Learn, Learning to Serve.

In one school I know, there is a secretary whose job it is at the beginning of each school year to call all the nonprofit agencies and programs in the area to ask if any need student volunteers.

Excellent.

No, not really.

Students should be the ones choosing the agencies and programs. Students should be the ones making the calls. Students should be the ones making the visits to observe what service is already being done and what might be done with student help.

Is there a Rotary Club in the area? What about a fire department toy shop? Does the public library have a volunteer program? Does a local hospital have a gift shop that not only needs volunteer sales personnel, but items (like blue-ribbon student art works) to share with patients?

Those teachers and administrators, whose service-learning program is a fledgling, might well look to all the established philanthropic activities in the community to piggy-back as a start. And having a secretary show a group of volunteers (perhaps those elected to the governing offices of the student body) how to access these organizations and how to determine how students might integrate some volunteer service with their academic coursework, would be an ever so much wiser use of the secretary than to have her do all the calling and arranging on her own.

It's never failed me—this business of having students identify agencies and programs willing to use student volunteers. I ask a group of third graders I have never seen before in my life if they know any organizations in town doing good voluntary service; or if they know of any programs in town doing good voluntary service. And several third graders tell all of us about such activities.

In many instances, the pupils have relatives fully involved with such projects.

Cynthia sharing lessons learned with participants at Community Works Summer Institute 2004. Photo by Tammi Quinn

"My dad is in the Rotary and they"…"My aunt is a volunteer reader in a day-care center"…"My uncle helps with Special Olympics"…"My neighbor helps kids repair bikes at the Salvation Army store"… And so it goes.

If it's a primary school, ask the junior or senior high to provide some students to help the younger ones learn about age-appropriate service-learning activities in the community.

In one town, it seems the Junior League organized a choir, and provided music programs for any interested school. Would the choir accept some student volunteers, a group from each school, but programmed to sing at a neighboring school? Hmmm. Said the Junior League Choir Committee Chair.

"You mean we would ask the teachers to identify a few children, and we would arrange for them to practice with our choir, and then when the choir is performing at a school other than the one they attend they could be part of the choir?"

"Yes."

"That would mean a lot of transporting of a few children, and finding practice and performance times to suit their schedules?"

"Yes."

Should the call come from some students in the school's choir or music program, instead of from a secretary or teacher, there just might be quicker acceptance of the concept.

But even if the answer is a negative, the students have learned how to make such a call—readying them for a lifetime of such exchanges! ❑

Sustainability, ***cont'd. from p. 4***

factors that shaped their local communities is the perfect anchor for the outdoor learning and the community inquiries in which so many Vermont educators excel and which are in turn treasured by so many communities. As the State Board of Education believed, this kind of education is critical to helping kids care about their communities. If they know their local natural and human communities, they are so much more likely to care about and treasure them. They will feel more connected to their homes and their towns. They'll know where they come from. And maybe they will stay—or at least come back—as adults.

But for what other purpose should we develop that understanding of place? Because our communities face many decisions and our citizens will have to make those decisions. And we want our citizens to make decisions that will improve our communities; that will work, not just for the short term, but for the long term. Not in ways that will compromise other aspects of life, or other places or times, but in ways that will benefit all those around us, for both current and future generations.

We've learned that not all decisions come to such good ends. Many of our communities have been led to make short-term decisions that benefit some but not all. For some reason, this has been accepted—either because we thought it was inevitable that not all people's needs could be considered or because some communities' needs have been valued more than others, or because we didn't have the perspective to realize that long-term effects would be different from short term ones.

Over the past few decades we've gained some perspective. Our more global experience has led us to realize that our resources are not, in fact, limitless. When we draw on and use up natural resources in one place, we cannot necessarily find them in another. in the future.

We have learned this from seeing what doesn't work and the losses we have suffered. By contrast, when we look for examples of systems that are sustainable, we find them most often in natural systems that have been able to survive endless challenges from within and without. We see the rules and resources of those systems: interdependence, diversity, cycles where everything is used, everything has a purpose, nothing is wasted, threats are overcome. When we know what we're looking for, we can see examples in human behavior as well: a recycling center that retrains disabled adults to repair damaged goods and provides materials for kids' art classes; an abandoned urban lot that elders and youth together transform into a vegetable garden, whose profits are reinvested into their activities; a garage that accepts broken down cars, awards tax deductions, and retrains adults to fix them for resale.

We've come to define sustainability as "Improving the quality of life for all—economically, socially and environmentally, withinEarth's limits—for present and future generations."

When a community faces a decision, we know that its members need to balance the factors with a long-term, integrated, equitable perspective. But we know that they probably won't be able to find a pre-existing answer. We don't have many models yet to go on. We don't often know exactly what the right decision is. We do know that they need to consider the complex relationships that characterize their particular community and the larger world. We know that they need to see and feel that interconnectedness so that they want to ask those important questions.

That's the purpose of the Sustainability standard, and the importance of Education for Sustainability. For about four years now, as I've helped engage teachers in this work, we have together realized that much of what we've already been teaching contributes to understanding and reaching for this standard. My colleagues who promote service-learning, place-based inquiries, hands-on science, integrative literacy—work together, and all our work fits together. What is Education for Sustainability? It's all the efforts that go into making citizens who can contribute to a sustainable future. It works best as a great overarching goal for helping us to recognize and strengthen our shared purpose.

When I work with teachers on developing approaches to education for sustainability, my path is always rooted in questions. How does the curriculum look through the lens of sustainability? How can we lead students to make connections and to become engaged in their community? Why is it that this kind of education seems to make schools better? We all value and espouse essential questions in our curricula; what more essential question is there than what our communities need for sustainability?

That said, we don't often pose that question with students. The best teachers have taught me to start with the small community that students can describe as their own. In that context, we build a sense of the principles or concepts that make the community work. And on that foundation, we open the door to raising questions that engage students in making a difference.

We have come to see that while Education for Sustainability grows in many forms, it has three main ingredients:

1. Understanding interconnectedness, that integrative thinking that can be as organic as understanding one's community and as formalized as systems analysis.
2. Knowledge of place—of our human and natural communities—that helps us develop the love of place that leads to stewardship.
3. Possession of self-efficacy, the awareness that we can each make a difference and the skills to do it.

If our education can pull together those three aims, in whatever ways we teachers approach them, we will engender the particular care and citizenship that can lead us toward a sustainable present and future. While the purpose for place-based education is implicit in its many forms, there's something critical about making it explicit. Just as we've learned with all kinds of pedagogy, we do better as teachers when we share our goals and plans explicitly with our students, when we make them partners in our curriculum and assessment. So too does our work get stronger when we collaborate with each other and consciously express our common goals and purposes.

The Vermont Education for Sustainability partners came together when they realized the shared goal of their various educational missions. The network around Education for Sustainability continues to grow now as we recognize the important strategies that make it possible.

With this issue, *Community Works Journal* and the work it supports, embraces Sustainability as the shared goal overarching the service-learning and place-based education it promotes. Neither the future of Kenya itself nor its children were being served by the "misplaced" education I observed there. We have a chance to do better. ❑

Community Discovery, ***cont'd. from p. 5***

straight people is the key to gay liberation. And so it goes with all forms of prejudice: If you know black people, Muslim people, single mothers, people on welfare, or homosexuals as friends and neighbors, your perceptions of these groups are based on direct firsthand experience rather than the stereotypes that are loose in popular and folk imaginations.

I'm not so naive as to suppose that firsthand knowledge and open communication are all that's needed to counteract prejudice, bigotry, and discrimination. Obviously the roots of racism, for example, run very deep in our society. But knowledge is an important first step forward and by drawing on models from ethnographic field research we can craft school projects that bring students safely and comfortably face to face with people who are different from themselves. I belabor this point because it's of such fundamental importance in a pluralistic society. Working to help students develop a respect for difference—as opposed to fearing it—should be a primary goal of every educator.

There are other equally significant ways in which ethnography can be applied in the classroom. Take for example, knowing your community and understanding how it works. By this I mean using ethnography to explore such aspects of hometown life as the work that people do, the way local government functions, the role of community institutions, and so forth. It's easy to imagine a great community-based project on occupation where students would interview and visit people at work, from carpenters, day care providers, and shop keepers to small business owners, data entry personnel, and factory workers.

There are equally rich possibilities in students documenting their own worlds and interests—as young people (i.e., youth culture), as members of families, and as community members in their own right. Not to mention the array of possibilities for doing historical ethnography, which is to say entering the multiple worlds of past experience through the memories of individuals and primary resource materials that also "speak" of those worlds.

As I hope I've made clear, ethnographic inquiry has great potential as a tool for community-based study, and I've chosen to focus on it here as an overarching, unifying theme for this column. In this column I intended to establish a general frame of reference for my approach to the study of history and culture. In future issues I'll talk in detail about how specific projects could be structured and carried out. Some of this will be based on my own experiences as a classroom teacher, some will be based on classroom projects that I have observed or been advisor to, and some will be extrapolated from my professional practice as a folklorist, doing ethnographic research and documentary production.

Joe Brooks asked me to initiate this column by spelling out what I care about and why, and as I toss that around in my mind it all comes down to this. Ethnography offers an immediate, firsthand window on everyday life and the glorious richness and complexity of human experience. I care passionately about the future, and it is my great hope that knowledge such as this, like the comedies and tragedies of the ancient Greeks, will prepare today's young people to make deeply humane choices, and as a consequence theirs will be a better world. ❑

Editor's note: Champlain Elementary School is engaged in a project like this using what they call "Legacy Cards" — see page 12.

Place, ***cont'd. from p. 6***

she asked, "Why are we using textbooks that focus on landforms in Arizona when we have such amazing resources right in our backyard?" Good question. Here's the picture: Gorham sits in the shadow of Mount Washington, the loftiest peak in New England, and home to the worst weather in the world. The Presidential Range has a fascinating alpine zone, classic glacial cirques, and some of the most awe-inspiring mountain terrain in the country. Yet most of the students have never hiked the mountains and the curriculum ignores the great local teaching resources. Instead, geography is taught using pretty pictures of faraway places.

Generic textbooks designed for the big markets of California and Texas provide the same homogenized, unnutritious diet as all those fast-food places on the strip. The landscape of schooling looks like sprawl America. State-mandated curriculum and high-stakes tests put everyone on the same page on the same day and discourage an attention to significant nearby learning opportunities. Educational biodiversity falls prey to the bulldozers of standardization. Schools hover like alien spacecraft, luring children away from their home communities. More and more, we drive a wedge between our children and the tangible beauty of the real world.

In the provocatively titled article "How My Schooling Taught Me Contempt for the Earth," Bill Bigelow illustrates this alienation. During his boyhood in the late 1950s, he rambled the hills around his home in Tiburon, California, just across the bridge from San Francisco.

> *I loved the land. I spent every after-school moment and every weekend or summer day, outside until it got dark. I knew where to dig the best underground forts and how to avoid the toffee-like clay soil...I knew from long observation at nearby ponds the exact process of a pollywog's transition into a frog, and the relative speed of different kinds of snakes: garter vs. gopher vs. western racer.... (We also) had a love/hate relationship with "development." Almost as another natural habitat, we played in the houses under construction: hide and seek, climbing and jumping off roofs, and rafting in basements when they flooded.*

Located near wetlands, grasslands, remnant redwood forests, and new development, the school was well situated for field trips and for social and natural science learning.

> *How did our schooling extend or suppress our naive earth-knowledge and our love of place? Through silence about the earth and the native people of Tiburon, Bel-Aire School, perched on the slopes of a steep golden-grassed hill, taught plenty. We actively learned to* ***not-think*** *about the earth, about that place where we were. We could have been anywhere–or nowhere. Teachers made no effort to incorporate our vast, if immature, knowledge of the land into the curriculum. Whether it was in the study of history, writing, science, arithmetic, reading or art, school erected a Berlin Wall between academics and the rest of our lives....The hills above the school were a virtual wilderness of grasslands and trees, but in six years, I can't recall a single "field trip" to the wide-open spaces right on our doorstep. We became inured to spending days in manufactured space, accustomed to watching more earth bulldozed and covered with yet more manufactured spaces.* (*Bigelow*, 1996)

Place, ***cont'd. on back cover***

Worm Farmers, ***cont'd. from p. 11***

have the youngsters close their eyes, and see whether they could tell when a flashlight shines on them. A discussion of how and why worms respond to light, and hands-on investigations would follow. “When the kids taught others about reproduction, they'd first ask them to find three types of worms in a container,” says Denise. “When the learners found the one- to two-week-old light-colored worms (‘teenagers’ with no middle band, or clitellum) and adults, they would discuss the six- to eight-week cycle from birth to breeding.” Finally, students were invited to use castings from the large-scale project in their own garden plots.

Wiggling into Business

The final prong of the mission statement loomed large for Denise's next batch of sixth graders: to create a worm-based business. After inviting a parent and business partner to teach marketing and business skills, the class created an action plan for The Big Green Worm Farm. Student teams first created a logo, stationery, and how-to brochure for homeowners, then imagined and designed income-producing products. Their unique line featured bagged potting mix made with 50 percent worm castings, handmade worm farms (lidded liter bottle bottoms with shredded paper) complete with an instruction and activity booklet, and worms by the pound. “Now we even promote ourselves as consultants, helping other schools and homeowners start worm composting projects, and displaying our project and wares at community festivals,” says Denise.

Start with Curriculum Goals

Squeezed by curriculum pressures and time constraints, teachers often ask how they can fit in a project like this. "I advise teachers not to tackle this type of project as something extra, but to first map their curriculum goals and standards, then consider how a worm composting project can support them," says Denise. "I started by building links to one curriculum area, then seeing what else fit as the project evolved." Math skills and concepts, she decided, would be an ideal fit with a vermiculture project. She began by listing her math standards—volume, yield, and so on—on one column of a chart, then identified in another column which aspect of the project would enable students to move toward each standard.

“Science, of course, was at the core,” says Denise. “As we moved into the second stage of mentoring and creating a business, we naturally integrated language arts and oral communications skills.” It's clear that learning via a meaningful project made its mark. “Now I know why it's important to know math, how to research information, read well, and learn to speak to groups,” admitted one student.

Get Materials from the Worm Farmers

Denise and her teaching partner, Deni Lopez, would be delighted to share details on the project and worm bin setup with other interested teachers. They have also offered to share a student-developed brochure on how to make liter-bottle worm farms and set up worm biology games and investigations.

To request a brochure, call or write The Big Green Worm Farm, Parkview Center School, 1500 Alexander St., Simi Valley, CA 93065; Phone: 805-520-6755. ❑

Backyards, ***cont'd. from p. 19***

children solve a word find with the hidden message that tells them only three New Hampshire mammals are true hibernators. Reading groups feature both Native American fables, (i.e., "How the Chipmunk Got his Stripes") and nonfiction stories. Tracking expeditions (courtesy of grant-funded snowshoes) show evidence of our furry neighbors much to the delight of my “Junior Naturalists.”

Discovering the stories that unfold daily in our surrounding communities is a powerful hook for students. The opportunities for critical thinking are endless and I find the enthusiasm of the students, their motivation for learning, and their levels of understanding and skill development inspiring.

During a recent sojourn, a visitor was told that the class was out on the trail. He walked down the trail and discovered the teacher, seemingly alone in a clearing. All he could hear was the rustling of leaves, and the occasional chatter of the wood’s guardian red squirrel. A bit confused, he looked around for the students. I smiled and pointed to random spots around the clearing. Children sat quietly, looking, drawing, and writing in small journals. After a few minutes, they gathered together and shared new observations.

When asked what changes had he noticed, an eight-year-old announced: “Well, when I first came out here, all I saw was rocks, trees, you know the usual stuff. Now I know, really know, how to look, and I can find all kinds of things…it’s like magical. See, look at this. I never would have seen something cool like this before.” In his hand, he held a crumpled leaf. On the underside, there was fastened the delicate webbing of a cocoon.

Naturalist Robert Pyle once said, “How can we teach children to care about the fate of the condor, when they haven’t made the acquaintance of the wren in the back yard?" In learning about their communities and their own personal place, children are discovering that “kids can make a difference in the world they live in.” ❑

Day's Work, ***cont'd. from p. 25***

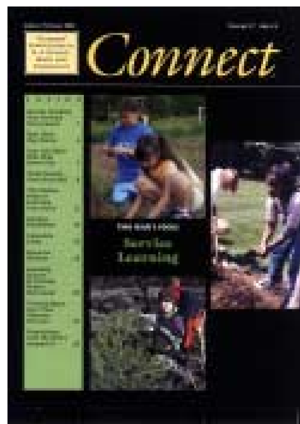
the Interact Club and to pull off ODW. Students have attended many early morning meetings, met with local rotary clubs and the chamber of commerce, organized a phone-a-thon to create jobs for students, prepared assemblies to inform the student body, and many other details to ensure success.

Operation Day’s Work included a number of local community businesses and individuals who welcomed students to come and volunteer in exchange for making a donation directly to Harwood so that one check could be sent to Honduras.

The money raised through Interact’s ODW helps purchase computers and software that will go to schools and a medical clinic. One school will use the funds to support a program attempting to keep girls in school past the 9th grade. In addition, their work will help provide children's vitamins and nutritional supplements, first aid supplies, and school supplies.

“Operation Day’s Work is a really good way for us to provide community service. I think that if more people are aware of the needs of others then people would be willing to help,” says Branden Kasper, sophomore, HUHS. ❑

Connect Magazine



Connect is a journal of teachers' innovations in elementary science, math and technology education. Each ad-free issue is based on a theme and showcases exemplary teaching from educators throughout North America. It provides a stimulating forum for those interested in inquiry-based learning in science, math and technology. Readers have called it a valuable support for teaching problem-solving skills, hands-on learning and interdisciplinary approaches. Now in its seventeenth year, *Connect* continues to reach a diverse audience of educators, administrators, home-schoolers and curriculum designers.

In *Connect*, educators write in-depth articles about their own experiences with students. These teacher-authors relate both challenges and opportunities encountered in the process of teaching. Each issue is full of successful instructional ideas, activities and resources.

Connect's current issue theme is Service-Learning. Recent themes have included a variety of math and science related topics such as games and puzzles, habitats, day sky/night sky, exploring with Lewis and Clark, and measurement. Each issue also includes:

- Links to national standards in science, math and technology;
- Resource Reviews: current information on outstanding books, equipment and materials;
- Literature Links: book suggestions to expand and support the theme; and
- Technology for Learning: a regular column with suggestions and resources for implementing the latest technology in your classroom.

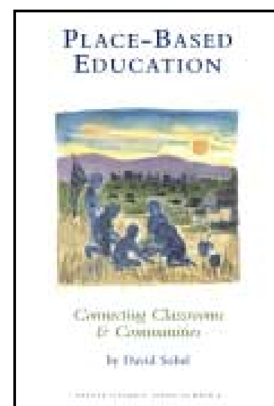
Connect is published five times during the school year at a cost of $25.00 for one year or $46.00 for two years. They also offer an emailed PDF version for $20.00 a year or $160.00 a year for a site license. A site license would allow one subscriber to distribute *Connect* throughout a school or district.

For subscriptions, contact: Synergy Learning, Inc., PO Box 60, Brattleboro, VT 05302, 800-769-6199, Fax 802-254-5233 or online at www.synergylearning.org. For information on writing for *Connect*, contact Heather Taylor, Associate Editor, or Casey Murrow, Editor, at the above address.

Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms & Communities

by David Sobel

In this original work, David Sobel presents an extremely comprehensive review of place-based education, its pedagogy and its practice. Author of the highly influential book *Beyond Ecophobia*, Sobel celebrates teachers emphasizing the interpenetration of school, community, and environment.



" Place-based education takes us back to basics, but in a broader and more inclusive fashion. Desirable environmental education, or what we're calling place-based education, teaches about both the natural and built environments. The history, folk culture, social problems, economics, and aesthetics of the community and its environment are all on the agenda. In fact, one of the core objectives is to look at how landscape, community infrastructure, watersheds, and cultural traditions all interact and shape each other."

"After a century of educating young people to be mobile, rootless, and autistic toward their places, better ideas are gaining steam. David Sobel's book is about a revolution in education that is connecting students to their neighborhoods, communities, and ecologies, and equipping them to be homecomers, stewards, citizens, and more. It is about joining heads, hands, hearts, and the places in which we might dwell with competent affection."

David Orr, author of *Ecological Literacy and Earth in Mind*

Learn more about this title, or any of Orion's other publications at www.oriononline.org, or call toll-free, 888-909-6568.

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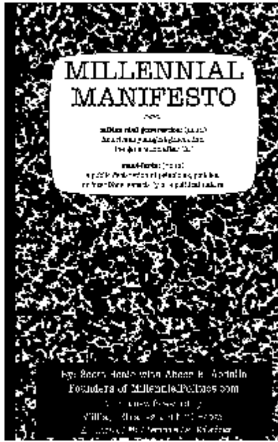

Millennial Manifesto

New Book Articulates Youth Activist Agenda

by Scott Beale and Abeer Abdalla

Millennial Manifesto, a new book about youth activism, student service, and generational politics in America is written by two young activists, Scott Beale and Abeer Abdalla. The product of over five years of research and nearly 1,000 interviews, *Millennial Manifesto* identifies a youth political agenda. The foreword is written by two generational experts, William Strauss and Neil Howe, the *New York Times* best-selling authors of *Millennials Rising*. According to Scott Beale, "There is an untold story of youth activism in our country that for far too long has been ignored." The book makes the case that the perception that youth don't care about politics couldn't be more wrong and predicts that 2004 will see a sharp rise in youth activism."

Scott Beale and Abeer Abdalla come from opposite ends of the political spectrum. Scott Beale worked for President Clinton as the Associate Director of Intergovernmental Affairs and was the youngest ever Core Supervisor to organize election logistics in Bosnia. Abeer Abdalla is an active Republican organizer who worked with Service Vote to help connect volunteerism and politics in the 2000 Election.

Millennial Manifesto has received critical acclaim. According to Hans Riemer, the Washington Director of Rock the Vote, "*Millennial Manifesto* is an outstanding tool for both students and young professionals who want to get involved and make a difference as well as for older people who want to understand this activist generation." (For more info on Rock the Vote, see: rockthevote.org/.)

In *Millennial Manifesto*, Scott and Abeer detail how young people are trying to lower the voting age to 16, about a 26-year-old woman is going to win a seat in Congress, about how today's "Campus Kids" may be the swing voters in the 2004 Election, and about a few college students who are organizing a youth march on the national mall in Washington, DC. From the presidential election, to the growth of AmeriCorps, the authors see 2004 as "The Year of the Youth Movement." For information: scott@scottbeale.com www.millennialpolitics.com/.

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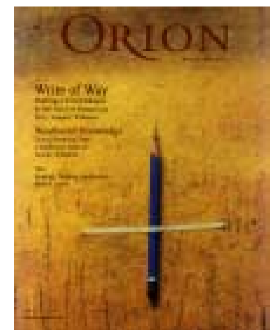
Call 802-655-5918 for submission information
Email us at: journal@vermontcommunityworks.org

ORION grassroots NETWORK

Community Works Journal would like to take this opportunity to introduce our readers to a truly valuable community building resource. The Orion Grassroots Network is a gathering place–on-line, in print, by phone, and in person—for organizations that are dedicated to healing society's fractured relationships with nature and community. Diverse in their focus and locale, these groups are moving humankind toward a renewed civil society–one that is just, democratic, nonviolent, and sustainable.

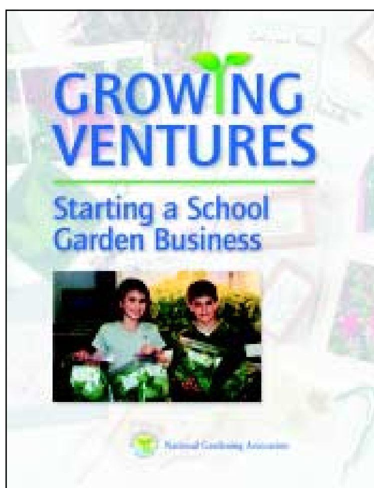
The strength of the Network comes from OGN members' awareness of each other's work and underlying common values such as the importance of fostering a human community that is connected and engaged with place; a sense of responsibility to the broader community of humans, nonhumans, and the Earth. OGN also supports building lasting mutual solutions made possible by bridging differences, seeking out diverse viewpoints, and encouraging dialogue.

OGN offers strategically created support services aimed to ease the isolation of working on a single issue by providing a forum where groups see their work as part of a broad movement for cultural change. All members' profile pages at OrionOnline describe their work and are browsed by 250,000 monthly visitors. An on-line events calendar helps get the word out to the public about members' upcoming programs, conferences, and fundraisers and an on-line Career Service connects them with high-caliber interns and job seekers to fill important positions in their organizations. Most members also choose to receive *Orion Magazine*, the award-winning magazine of people, culture, and nature. The magazine inform and inspires its readers to "be the change" they wish to see in the world, and also features beautiful works of art and photography.



The Grassroots Network encompasses a wide variety of organizations including nature centers, placed-based education projects, school and university programs, environmental justice groups, community empowerment advocates, creed-based ecology initiatives, and sustainable development and agriculture projects: nearly 600 in all. There are as many different organizations in the Network as there are ways to advocate for change. Orion says this makes intuitive sense an ecology of change must include all of the diverse members of the environmental and community grassroots movement. Join the conversation at: www.oriononline.org/ogn/.

Growing Ventures: Starting a School Garden Business



A new entrepreneurial book, *Growing Ventures: Starting a School Garden Business* is available from the National Gardening Association. Green Business ventures are budding in schools across the country as students of all ages use their gardening savvy to turn a profit. Imagine how confidence and learning can flourish when youngsters design products or services; survey potential customers; tackle production challenges; promote their products; and track expenses, revenues, and profits. *Growing Ventures* features stories of actual classroom, schoolwide, and community business projects: a hydroponics basil enterprise, school farmers' market, wholesale salsa venture, and more. You'll also find step-by-step guidelines, activities, and worksheet for engaging students in planning and implementing a plant- or garden-related business that meets your curriculum goals.

Available from NGA's online Gardening with Kids Store: www.store.kidsgardening.com and NGA's *Gardening with Kids Catalog*. For a copy, call 800-538-7476, ext. 203.

The Service-Learning Student's Guide & Journal For Elementary School

by Robert Schoenfeld

Along with the elementary guide, *Service-Learning: Student's Guide & Journal For Middle and High School*, and *Service-Learning: Student's Guide & Journal For Higher Education* are new resource booklets that will help students organize their service-learning project and improve their thinking and writing skills.

The Student's Guide & Journal will aid students in their pursuit of scholastic achievement while guiding and inspiring them to take their service to their community and the nation to a higher level of achievement. *The Student's Guide & Journal* is a useful resource for any service-learning activity including: environmental programs, tutoring and mentoring projects, helping the homeless and the hungry.

For ordering information: tel: 206-722-1988
email: RSchoe8673@aol.com

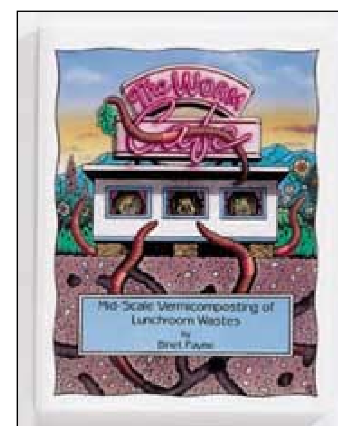
The National Gardening Association Adds a New On-Line Resource for Teachers —www.kidsgardening.com

A new National Gardening Association Web site, kidsgardening.com, provides a great resource where educators can find information, inspiration and community, community, and importantly, how-tos. The site is easy to navigate for time-limited teachers and features a wealth of articles, classroom stories, FAQs, how-to projects, on-line courses and much more. Visitors to the parent NGA site can sign up for free e-newsletters, including NGA's *Regional Gardening Reports*, with the latest gardening news and tips for 14 regions. The on-line NGA Garden Shop and Gardening with Kids stores offer access and ordering. All store profits support NGA's educational programs.

The National Gardening Association itself has long been recognized as a national leader in garden-based education. This includes providing horticultural and teaching expertise, resources, and networking opportunities to help kids in schools and communities grow. NGA's Youth Garden Grants program, begun in 1982, has helped more than 1.2 million youngsters reap the rewards and vital life lessons that green oases offer. With support from industry sponsors, they now offer an array of grants and awards that recognize exemplary school and community garden projects and leaders and that help launch new programs. Since 1990, their award-winning GrowLab Science Program has been implemented in 25,000 classrooms! In recent years, they have created international programs so youngsters could exchange gardening and lifestyle information with peers in other cultures.
www.kidsgardening.com / www.gardening.org (NGA site)

The Worm Cafe
Worm Composting–A Classroom Project

A comprehensive how-to manual that provides clever guidelines for how classrooms can work with their cafeterias to compost food waste by using (and studying) composting worms. Students learn about ecosystems and food webs as they help save money for their school. Includes charts, tables, photographs, worksheets, 3 pages of reproducible posters geared to spark kids' curiosity, and more. Project-based learning at its best. 180 pages



The Worm Cafe $29.95
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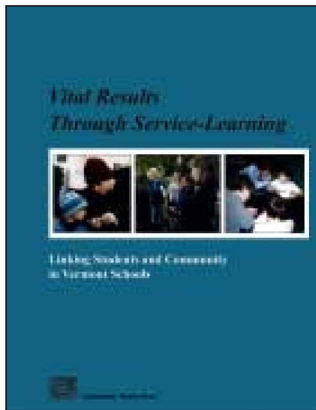

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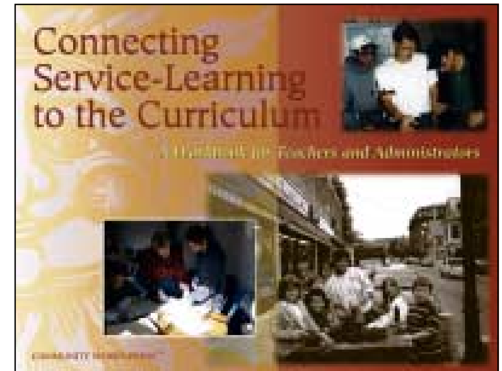

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Place, ***cont'd. from p. 29***

It was the same everywhere. In my mid-twenties, I got interested in plant taxonomy. After peering at a violet under a hand lens one afternoon, I paged through Gray's *Manual of Botany* trying to understand the difference between stamens, pistils and calyxes, when poof! the proverbial light bulb went on. In my mind's eye, I saw the much-larger–than-life-size model of a flower that had perched on the lab table at the front left corner of my tenth grade biology classroom. "That was a model of flowers that grew right outside the classroom door!" I said to myself in disbelief. As a high school biology student, my unquestioned misconception was that this was a model of a rainforest flower, or at least a far-away flower. It never occurred to me that real flowers, with real flower parts, existed on the school playground.Yet, I was your true science geek–carried a slide rule, got over 700 on my biology achievement test, and planned on following Martin Arrowsmith's footsteps into biochemical research. I was on the ball, but most of our teachers had no sense that it was important to connect up the classroom world with the nearby outside world.

Place-based education is the antidote to the not-thinking about the Earth common in many schools. Instead of settling for textbook accounts of distant places, Katie Avery and the other third graders at Edward Fenn Elementary School worked with a children's book author to write and illustrate a book about Gorham. As you read it, you "laugh at the hilarious adventures of Peewee Skunk, Amos Moose and Shylee Beaver, go back in time and learn about the history of Gorham, visit different places around Gorham today, and find out about the jobs people do." Is it a surprise that the third grade social studies test scores and civic pride increased as a result of this project? Which leads us into a definition for place-based education:

Place-based education is the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and other subjects across the curriculum. Emphasizing hands-on, real-world learning experiences, this approach to education increases academic achievement, helps students develop stronger ties to their community, enhances students' appreciation for the natural world, and creates a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing citizens. Community vitality and environmental quality are improved through the active engagement of local citizens, community organizations, and environmental resources in the life of the school.

Place-based education converts the activist plaint of Not in My Backyard (NIMBY) to Please in my Backyard (PIMBY). As a truly grassroots movement, its practitioners draw strength from the image of those hearty dandelions and other herbaceous plants that force their way up through asphalt. As William James described,

> *I am done with great things and big things, great institutions and big success, and I am for those tiny, invisible, molecular moral forces that work from individual to individual by creeping through the crannies of the world like so many rootlets, or like capillary oozing of water, yet which, if you give them time, will rend the hardest monuments of man's pride.*

Drops of waters and rootlets unite! Give me your students yearning to be free! It's a simple proposition really. Bring education back into the neighborhood. Connect students with adult mentors, conservation commissions, and local businesses. Get teachers and students into the community, into the woods and on the streets—closer to beauty and true grit. Get the town engineer, the mayor, and the environmental educators onto the schoolyard and inside the four walls of the school. This is where we belong. ❑

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