

# Four Rivers Currents

September 2012

## From the Principal's Desk... **WELCOME TO YEAR 10**

Thanks for sending us your children this year. We've had a great opening. Every seventh grader I've asked has said that school is going well so far. Even if that might be part of the honeymoon, I'll take it. I want to use this first Currents to share with you my letter that introduces our Application for Charter Renewal which I submitted this summer. It summarizes the accomplishments of our school over the past five years. Next month I'll share the priorities for what we're working on this year.

Dear Commissioner Chester and Charter School Office Director Barnett,

As Principal and Head of School at the Four Rivers Charter Public School, I'm proud to offer this application for the renewal of our charter. After an initial term that set the school on strong foundations, the second charter term has seen Four Rivers consolidate gains, systematize practices and policies, and reach significant levels of academic achievement. Most satisfying perhaps, our staff and school community have pursued a mission and implemented practices that help students grow in significant ways.

The pages that follow aim to describe and provide evidence of the following accomplishments realized over the past five years:

Four Rivers reached full enrollment of 192 by 2008 and expects to exceed its revised cap of 212 with next year's enrollment. Our waitlist has exceeded our available spots every year. Surrounding communities see Four Rivers as a successful school and families want their children to attend.

Four Rivers teachers have successfully worked together to implement the active, project-based practices of Expeditionary Learning, a model for how public schools can help students develop 21st Century skills and strong fundamentals.

Four Rivers 10th grade students last year scored first in the state on the Biology MCAS, tied for first in the state on the English Language Arts MCAS, and tied for 12th in the state on the Math MCAS. Math and Science scores have been rising steadily over the second term and English has been strong for five years running. While not a test-driven school, we prepare students to succeed on these assessments without turning our entire program towards test prep.

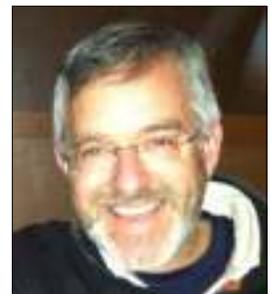
Four Rivers faculty and administration have established structures and procedures for effective institutional communication, problem-solving, and decision-making. We know how to operate and we've done so effectively.

Four Rivers has completed every year for 10 years with a positive balance sheet. We have budgeted carefully and conservatively, living within our means. We have provided a quality program through challenging financial times and we have not had to rely on private funds or one-time stimulus funds.

With these accomplishments, we still see important opportunities for improvement. We do not have 100% of our graduates continuing on to college. We have not met all achievement or growth objectives in our middle school. And we know that we can continue to strengthen a culture of achievement and character in our community on a day to day basis.

As we look ahead to our next five years, we want this good school to become great. We want to figure out how to inspire and support the greatest growth for those students who struggle the most. We want to support every one of our teachers to create engaging and

*Continued on Page 7*



*Peter Garbus, Principal*

## Grade 7 News

### WELCOMING NEW 7th GRADERS



In the words of our new 7th grade students, the first day of school at the Wendell State Forest was a "fast-paced, magical, exhilarating, spectacular, unique, tasty, fun, 'GORPy' day of togetherness." The entire middle school spent the day hiking in crews, greeting other crews with special salutations, and learning about buddy crews through GORP munching games and inquiries about personal artifacts. This day truly helped set the tone for the year, as we all started on neutral ground, built new relationships and learned about the culture of Four Rivers.

*Left - Casey, Oshen and Tim stop to rest on the trail. Below - Ms. Hobbs' crew, woodland antics.*



*Above and Right: An exercise in teamwork and cooperation. Seventh graders are already learning how important these qualities are as they work and learn and have fun at their new school.*



## Grade 8 News

### ORIENTATION SETS AGENDA FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

Who am I? What experiences shape who I am? How do I relate to others around me? And, what's next? Two weeks of 8th grade orientation culminated in the launch of our Guiding Questions for the year. Throughout Orientation, we worked to develop crew norms, to explore the transformation of a character named Cole in our summer reading book, *Touching Spirit Bear*, to individually reflect on who we are as we enter this school year, and to begin to form a vision of who we might want to be at the end of the year. Eighth grade is an exciting time in that it culminates in the first of three Four Rivers Passages. Next June our students will present their reflections on their middle school experiences, on who they are, and what they hope for in the future. Our orientation week set the stage for the year-long journey ahead.



**The eighth grade spent a day at Morse Hill, near Lake Wyola in Shutesbury**



*Left top—On the "Whale Watch" low-ropes activity, Ms. Gilbert's crew tried to stay balanced while keeping a glass of water from spilling.*

*Left below—Ms. Wilson's Crew worked to get each person to a different platform with different people using a rope swing. If anyone touched the ground, they had to start over in their original spot.*

*Bottom—At Lake Wyola, each team built a raft that they paddled out to a canoe where their leader waited to be pulled back in.*



## DIV II NEWS

### **MATH** — *Ms. Howard*

In ninth grade math, students have begun the year with a fun, hands-on exploration of the TI-83 plus calculators. Many of the students have not worked with them before, and our goal is to become efficient with them while understanding some of the quirks they have. It is NOT necessary for ninth graders to purchase one of these for themselves, as we have a classroom set that stays in room 210. In addition to the calculators, ninth graders have begun their pre-assessments in the software program ALEKS. The pre-assessment will focus on Algebra readiness and Algebra topics.

In tenth grade math, students have begun to learn some of the fundamental geometry vocabulary to set them up for success through the year as we explore many areas of geometry. Although the Algebra they learned last year had its strict rules, Geometry takes “nitpickiness” to a new level. Tenth graders will once again work in ALEKS throughout this year, and there are some new videos that will supplement classroom teaching and the ALEKS software. For more details, please visit Ms Howard’s website on the school webpage.

### **SPANISH 1** — *Ms. Beardslee*

Spanish 1 students have started the year reviewing the verb SER and using adjectives to describe themselves and others. They have reviewed how to spell their name and also have begun to answer simple questions and respond to simple commands in Spanish.

### **ENGLISH** — *R. Ambuter*

Ninth grade is beginning to explore perspective and truth through literature. As a grade we will read *Pobby and Dingan*, a novella about Kellyanne Williamson, a young girl who has two imaginary friends: Pobby and Dingan. They are on a walk with her father one day and he loses them. As the community is enlisted to help find them, we will work to answer the question: Are Pobby and Dingan real? This will be the first of several essays aimed to help 9th graders build literary analysis and expository writing skills.

What matters? This is the question tenth graders will explore in English. We begin with an investigation of the Transcendentalist movement. On September 14th, the 10th grade will travel to Walden Pond to see artifacts and primary source documents of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau as well as the places where these writings originated. Students will read essays by Emerson and Thoreau; explore wildness, confidence, connection to nature, intuition, free thought and other Transcendentalist ideas in their own lives; and begin writing narratives about what they believe in.

### **FOUR RIVERS READS:**

Do you have books in your home that would be of interest to our students? Please consider donating them to Four Rivers! They will be used both to enhance teachers' classroom libraries, and as part of a new program we are trying that offers each student at Four Rivers a chance to pick out a book of their choice each month to keep (or return). We hope that through book sharing, our students will build a strong culture of literacy. To donate books please contact Ryan Ambuter ([rambuter@fourriverscharter.org](mailto:rambuter@fourriverscharter.org)) or bring them to room 203 in the high school. Also, please contact Ryan if you are interested in helping solicit donations and sort books. Thank you!

## DIV III NEWS

### **JUNIOR ORIENTATION** — *Ms. Plath*

The junior class began their year with a two-night camping trip to Savoy Mountain State Forest. We spent time on Wednesday swimming, playing games, and catching up after a summer apart. On Thursday, we did trail work, clearing brush and trash from several trails in the area, and then returned to our base camp to start setting goals and planning for the year ahead. We cooked our dinners over the open campfire, told ghost stories and riddles, made s'mores, and spent time together as a whole grade and as individual crews. On Friday, we returned to school to talk about the academic year ahead, to solidify our goals for the semester, and wrap up a great orientation week.



*Above—Juniors chilling at Savoy.*

*Left—Standing on one leg, . . . and losing balance.*

*Below— Talking about goals*



### **Spanish 3** — *Ms. Beardslee*

Spanish 3 students began the year putting their agreement to speak only in Spanish in class into their own words and signing it. Each group then held a small ceremony in which they took parts of a rope forming a circle and shared one way that they could support the group in this immersion challenge and one way that the group could help them in their challenge. Some examples that shared were that they could help others with grammar, with listening skills, by showing compassion and patience or with pronunciation. Students highlighted needing support and patience from others, needing compassion from others and also needing vocabulary and reminders to speak Spanish with peers in class. Students signed their agreement and then celebrated with cookies! This is a ceremony that this group will renew each month to remind themselves of this commitment they have made to supporting one another in this challenge.

## NURSE'S NOTES

Welcome back everyone; and, a warm hello to all the new students and faculty. Following are just a few reminders:

- New students and those in 10<sup>th</sup> grade need to submit their physicals to me. This is a state mandated regulation. If you have not notified me of the exam date, please do so.
- PLEASE send a snack with your student each day; many need a boost mid-morning (crackers and a slice of cheese or peanut butter crackers have protein and limited carbohydrate)
- All oral medications must be taken at the health office. If a student uses an inhaler for asthma, the first dose of the year requires my assessment for proper administration.
- Remember: Flip flops are not appropriate footwear at school.
- ALL students should bring a water bottle to school.

Please feel free to contact me by phone, 775-4577; or e-mail [jmilton@fourriverscharter.org](mailto:jmilton@fourriverscharter.org)

~ *Jeanne Milton, R.N.*

## BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHT

**Wednesday  
September 19th  
6:30-8:30 pm**

**Parents, come and meet your  
child's teachers and hear  
what they have planned for  
the year.**

**Refreshments will be served  
in the Common Room at the  
end of the evening**

## FAMILY COUNCIL COMMUNITY DAY

**Sat. October 6, 4 - 9 pm  
at the School**

**JOIN US FOR COOKOUT & MOVIE  
MEET & MINGLE!**

**Get to know New & Returning Families!**

**Cookout 4:00-6:00 pm**

**Family Council is cooking hot dogs, ham-  
burgers and veggie burgers. Bring a side  
dish or dessert to share!**

**Movie in the Blue Barn 6:30-9:00 pm**

**Family Council provides popcorn. Bring  
your own lawn chair.**

**WELCOME TO YEAR 10** *continued from page 1*

and effective curriculum. We want to connect our students more and more to real problems in the world through which they can learn essential content.

On behalf of the Four Rivers Charter Public School board of trustees and our entire school community, thank you for the opportunity and privilege to serve our students. We have worked hard to establish a good school and will continue to do so, with your support.

Sincerely,

Peter Garbus, Principal and Head of School

**X-COUNTRY**

The newest sport, Four Rivers Cross Country is enjoying it's FIRST SEASON! Congratulations to the 16 courageous folks who are trying it out (some) for the first time.

Our first meet is next Wednesday, September 19th! A huge thank you to Mr. Garbus, Mr. Plotkin and Ms. Wood for making this team happen. Huzzah!

Any questions? Email Eliza Beardslee at [ebeardslee@fourriverscharter.org](mailto:ebeardslee@fourriverscharter.org)

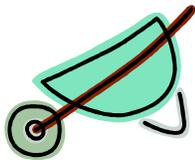
**SPECIAL EDUCATION****NOTICE**

Four Rivers is committed to providing quality education to all students. If for any reason you would like to request information about eligibility for special education or 504 services, please contact Kate Conant.

Kate will be coordinating the referral process, evaluations, and students on Individualized Education Plans and 504 Plans. She will be available to speak to any interested parent on "Back to School Night" on September 19th and subsequent parent gatherings.

**WHEELBARROWS AND SPADES NEEDED!**

Do you have a spare in good condition? Satisfy the wish list of our Nature class and our Garden Club. Call Harlan Smith at x204 before bringing to the school.

**VOLUNTARY STUDENT****ACCIDENT INSURANCE**

Once again the school is making this student accident insurance available. There is also an extended dental benefit available. See the brochure on our web site under "Links and Documents" - call Harlan Smith at the school with

**FOUR RIVERS FALL 2012 APPAREL ORDERS**

Order Forms are due Friday, September 21st, for delivery around October 18th. Soccer or regular Four Rivers sweatshirts, hats and other apparel can also be personalized. Order forms are on the Four Rivers Family Council web site and in the school office.

## FACULTY ENJOYED THEIR OWN ORIENTATION WEEK IN AUGUST

*Right — CPR Training in the Common Room.*

*Below — A faculty outing to the High Ledges in Shelburne*



**Big Y® Education Express® Program is back!** Great news! BigY is committed to give away up to \$3.5 million in educational supplies to our local schools! Sign up starts today and points will begin accumulating on October 4, 2012. See the Family Council web page for details and to sign up.



### AN EASY WAY TO SUPPORT YOUR SCHOOL

The Four Rivers Family Council would like everyone to sign up for Stop and Shop's A+ School Rewards. It is an easy way to earn money for the school.

With A+ School Rewards, points accrue with each purchase where the Stop & Shop Card is used. It even works with purchases made online with Peapod by Stop & Shop. At the end of each month, these points determine your school's cash total which is automatically credited to its account and school totals updated each month. (Please note: Gift cards (excluding store brand gift cards), pharmacy, alcohol and/or cigarette purchases are excluded from accruing points.)

A+ School Rewards are rounded per transaction to the nearest whole dollar amount. At the end of each month, each school's dollar amount is determined which is then automatically credited to its account.

# NEWS FROM THE GUIDANCE OFFICE

## COLLEGE FAIRS

College Fairs are abundant in the Pioneer Valley throughout the fall. Seniors can benefit from the convenience of contacting large numbers of college representatives gathered in one location. College fairs can also be useful to Juniors as they start to think about college and are seeking general information about a lot of schools. Locally scheduled fairs include:

Northfield Mount Hermon. Sunday, September 30<sup>th</sup> 4:00 – 5:00

Hampshire County College Fair, Hopkins Academy, Hadley. Tuesday, October 2, 6:00 – 8:00.

There are a number of other opportunities throughout the region and details can be found here:

[http://www.neacac.org/cf\\_fall.cfm](http://www.neacac.org/cf_fall.cfm)

## STANDARDIZED TESTING

Seniors are reminded that the dates for registering for upcoming SAT and ACT tests are fast approaching.

### SAT Dates and Deadlines

<i>Test Date</i>	<i>Sign up deadline</i>	<i>Late sign up (extra fee)</i>
November 3rd	Sign up by October 4 <sup>th</sup>	Late registration 10/19
December 1st	Sign up by November 1st	Late registration 11/16

### ACT Dates and Deadlines

<i>Test Date</i>	<i>Sign up deadline</i>	<i>Late sign up window (extra fee)</i>
October 27, 2012	September 21, 2012	September 22 – October 5, 2012
December 8, 2012	November 2, 2012	November 3 – 16, 2012

SAT registration and preparation materials are at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

ACT registration and preparation materials are at [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

Fee waivers are available based on the income guidelines posted here. If you think you are eligible for a fee waiver see Mr. Stenson; you need the fee waiver at the time of registration.

## PSAT's

All sophomores and juniors will be taking the PSAT's on Wednesday, October 17<sup>th</sup>, at Four Rivers.

There is a fee of \$14 to administer the test and this will be added directly to family bills. Fee waivers are available to those who meet the income eligibility guidelines listed here

## COLLEGE REP VISITS

A number of college admission reps will be visiting Four Rivers starting toward the end of this month. These are posted in the high school and students are reminded at community meeting. Upcoming visits include:

Clark University, 9/18 @ 2:00 pm

Whitman College, 10/2 @ 2:00 pm

Evergreen State 10/12 @ 9:30 am

UMass Amherst 10/19 @ 2:00 pm

UMass Boston 10/22 @ 2:00 pm

Framingham State 10/30 @ 2:00 pm

**Andy Stenson, College Counselor—[astenson@fourriverscharter.org](mailto:astenson@fourriverscharter.org)**

## **ADMISSIONS NEWS**

### **OPENINGS FOR CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR**

#### **OPENINGS IN 10th and 11th**

#### **POSSIBLE FUTURE OPENINGS IN OTHER GRADES**

We are accepting applications for enrollment in grades 10 and 11 and for possible future openings in other grades. Word of mouth via our Four Rivers families is always the best advertising.

If you know of a student who might be interested in our high school, or if you meet someone new to the area who does not know about Four Rivers, please invite them to call Leslie Taylor, Registrar, for details and deadlines.

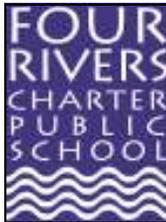
Deadline for our next interim lottery is 9:00 am on Monday, October 1st.

**CALL NOW!**

**Leslie Taylor—Registrar—413-775-4577**

“This institution is an equal opportunity provider. To file a complaint of discrimination write  
USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Washington, DC 20294”

*Four River Charter Public School is dedicated to educating young people for lives of learning and service. The school offers a rigorous academic program aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks and an emphasis on character development for moral and social responsibility. Three central themes – nature, technology and community – pervade the teaching and learning at the school. Four Rivers works closely with parents and seeks both to serve and learn from the many resources of Franklin County.*



Four Rivers Charter Public School  
248 Colrain Rd., Greenfield, MA 01301