

Four Rivers Currents

February / March 2013

From the Principal's Desk...

LESSONS FROM MY MOTHER: LOOK FOR THE GOOD IN PEOPLE

My mom passed away last month and I think it will help me to tell you a bit about her, how she lived her life, and her legacy to me. Students at our school and members of our staff have lost parents or other loved ones, and it's often difficult to know what to say. Perhaps to say their name out loud, to talk about them means that their memory can live on. So let me tell you a bit about Barbara Cohen Garbus.

My mom was born in Buffalo, New York, in 1943, the only child of Heffren, a lawyer, and Selma, an actress. She grew up relatively well off, spending summers at camp and attending private schools. She went to a good college where she met my dad. His fraternity hired her singing group and the rest, as they say, is history. She worked as an interior designer through most of her adult life, though my mom saw her most important role as raising their four children to be upstanding, contributing members of society.

My mom valued kindness above all else. We found an amazing book she made when she was 13. It's an autobiography -- *The Story of Me* -- that she wrote for a school assignment. In it, she tells the story of her family and where they're from. She tells about early experiences with her family and vacations and school. She writes about herself, her strengths and her weaknesses. After sharing her weaknesses, she wrote the following:

"I try to be nice and kind and friendly towards people and I hope they like me for it. Although I'm shy, I like people and I certainly want them to feel the same way towards me and I go out of my way to have them feel that way. I look for the good points in people and influence my friends as to those good points, which not only wins friends for me but for the person talked about as well. Of course there are some people that I dislike but I try to hide my feelings."

At 13, she captured exactly the message she repeated to us again and again.

My mom also cared a great deal about effort and planning. We came across years of diaries she kept, in which she reported the highlights of what was happening in her day to day life. Most of those entries are about her children. Here's one entry she wrote about me when I was 15:

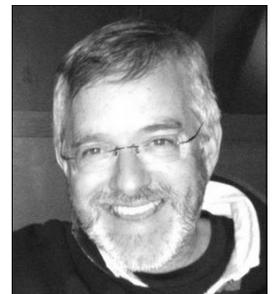
"Peter's a terrible procrastinator. The less he has to do, the more he wastes time watching TV. He waits 'til the last minute to do projects or study for tests. He usually does well anyway, but he has awful study habits. We keep nagging him and warning him of what will happen in college, but he gets mad and says he'll get it done on his own."

Ironic, huh? And here I am telling student after student that it's their effort that counts.

None of us choose our parents, yet we probably can't help becoming like them. I appreciate the lessons and the life my mom and dad provided me. I do try to see the good in every person, as my mother taught me. And I try to plan ahead and not procrastinate, though this writing was completed very close to deadline.

From my father, I acquired a bit of gumption and risk-taking and an ability not to take criticisms and complaints too personally -- even when they're meant to be. He was a lawyer and frequently had to coordinate 20 people in a room trying to write one document. From both of my parents these have proved to be useful skills for a teacher and Principal.

Our parents raise us, they teach us, they love us, and they try to prepare us for independence -- for when we're living our own lives and they're no longer there to guide us. My mom and my dad are both gone now, and yet I feel them very close to me every single day. Thanks for allowing me to share these thoughts and thanks to all of you who have shared your support for my loss.



Peter Garbus, Principal

Grade 7 News

From Museum Visitors to Museum Exhibitors

From late November to early January, the 7th grade students were Time Travelers in training. They studied classification, geologic time and paleogeography in preparation for the *Postcards from The Past* project in which students are assigned to research a particular part of earth's history and use those science facts to write a short piece of science fiction. In December, students visited the Bedneski Museum of Natural History on the Amherst College campus, and combed the collection for fossils, footprints and bones that would give them clues about the creatures that inhabited Earth during their assigned time periods. Museum director Alfred Venne talked with students about what it takes to create an exhibit. With much creativity, peer editing and revision, the postcards were completed just as semester one ended and many of them are indeed museum quality. The Postcards will be on display at the Bedneski Museum of Natural History for the month of February. We encourage you to go and enjoy the museum and the beautifully crafted postcards Tue - Sunday 11AM - 4PM and Thursday Evening 6-10pm.

Right: Ms. Locke and Hanna interpret museum materials.

Below: Milou and Oshen sketch extinct animals.



Right: Grade 7 at the Bedneski Museum of Natural History.

Far right: Elliott sketches dino bones.



Grade 8 News

ENGLISH & SOCIAL STUDIES

Eighth graders recently finished their six-week investigation of medieval times. After extensive research, creating their own medieval character, and a visit from the Society of Creative Anachronism (SCA), students were ready to begin their culminating project: writing medieval ballads from the perspective of their character. For two weeks, students worked hard to create plots for their ballads that were tragic, historically accurate, and woven together with consistent rhyme schemes. After three or four revisions, they were finally done. For exceeding credit, a few students even put music to their ballad and performed it for the class! Their work will be published in a class book, and their work will be shared with members of the SCA.



Tessa Burt and Robin Williams try on some chain mail during the SCA visit.

SERVICE INTENSIVE

The Four Rivers mission statement reads: “*Four Rivers Charter Public School is dedicated to educating young people for lives of learning and service.*” For the past month, eighth graders have been exploring the question, *what does it mean to be of service?* To begin, eighth and twelfth graders joined together during Community Meeting to discuss a survey that they had taken on the question: *what counts as service?* Is it service to give blood? To visit your grandmother? To volunteer at a soup kitchen? They also worked together in small groups to define ‘service.’ The next week, eighth grad-



ers took part in the very first Eighth Grade Service Intensive, where they spent every morning of one week providing some kind of service in the community. Eighth graders volunteered at several Head Start pre-schools, at the Newton School, the Greenfield Public Library, the Yazwinski Farm in Old Deerfield, and with Community Meals in Greenfield. Each day they reflected on their experiences and responded to quotes about service in their service journals. Eighth graders then worked in small groups to discuss how this spirit of service could enter into their everyday lives. We are hopeful that service week was not the end of our investigation, but only the beginning.

Above: 8th and 12th graders share a Community Meeting. Left: 8th and 12th graders talk about what it means to be of service.

DIV 2 NEWS

MATH—*Ms. Howard*

In 9th grade math students have been finishing up their investigation on linear equations. They are now expected to be able to find the equation of a line from 2 points, from a graph, or graph a line from the equation or from 2 points. In addition, they have learned about the “weird” linear equations – the ones that are completely horizontal and have a zero slope, and the ones that are completely vertical and have an undefined, or no slope. These concepts are necessary to know inside and out, because they are the building blocks of all future math, right up through calculus. Our next foray will be into exploring inequalities and absolute value equations.

In 10th grade math, students have been learning all the differences of the many quadrilaterals. While they have been familiar with parallelograms, rhombi, squares and rectangles since elementary school, they are now using the properties of them along with algebra to solve problems. Next up for 10th graders will be surface area and volume of prisms, pyramids, cones, and cylinders.

U.S. HISTORY—*Ms. Tabachnick*

Grade 9

US History 1 students recently wrote slave narratives. They read multiple slave narratives and researched slavery in America during specific time periods. They synthesized and applied their research to write a narrative of their own. Each narrative reflected a different point of view, based on the time, the place, and the individual experiences they learned about during the inquiry process. We are moving into our analytic study of documents written during the American Revolution that still guide our nation to this day.

Grade 10

US History 2 students are involved in the second of three parts of the Race and Rights Standard exploration. They recently completed the first: a study of the 1955 murder of Emmett Till in Money, Mississippi. They analyzed primary source reactions to the murder and trial, comparing and contrasting them to their own, ultimately drawing their own conclusions regarding the verdict and fallout. They are currently involved in a case study of a landmark Supreme Court Civil Rights case of their choice.

BIOLOGY — *Ms. Stamas*

The 10th grade Biology classes visited the 7th grade to observe and actually grade their plant and animal cell 3-D models. We were given rubrics and assigned 7th grade partners. The 7th graders explained the function of the organelles and described why they chose the materials that they used. Overall, the creativity of the 7th grade amazed us! Some of us, once in 7th grade ourselves, remember being critiqued by 10th graders and remember being nervous and anxious. In the end, the time spent in their classroom was a fun experience and a nice review of cell organelles.

by Mollie Fuller and Amber Magin

Walking into Ms. Locke’s room was a blast from the past. As I walked in I saw waves of old shoe boxes, paint, and play-doh. I saw a plant cell, a boxy looking green interpretation with many chloroplasts. Then as I scanned the room once more, I found to my eager excitement that Ms. Locke added a new cell to the study this year, a bacteria cell. I saw the nervous faces of 7th graders as we, the former 7th graders who were now 10th graders, walked into the room, pen and paper in hand, ready to grade their hard work. I felt for them as they explained to me about the function of the organelles. I knew what they were going through because once I was that 7th grader feeling intimidated in the presence of a 10th grader. Their artful and amazing creations and replications were wonderful to see and I am glad that we got to see their work. — *by Trent Holmes*

DIV 3 NEWS

ENGLISH — *Ms. Plath*

Seniors

The spring semester of English 12 is creative writing, and we're off and running. Students received course packs with all the poetry we'll be reading in our first unit. They're practicing annotating poems and discussing them for figurative language, nuance, and word meanings. Each week, they also write their own original poems and participate in critique circles. Look for excerpts from student work in upcoming newsletters!

Juniors

The second half of the English 11 Comparative Literature class is Persuasion and Satire. We're starting the course with a study of persuasive writing and speech. Students have studied famous speeches to identify persuasive writing techniques, and given those same speeches to practice their own persuasive speaking skills. Now, they're writing their own original persuasive speeches. Along the way, we're looking at logic and reason, including deductive and inductive reasoning and logical fallacies. Warning: your children might soon become much more adept at producing well-reasoned arguments.

MOCK TRIAL DIVAS



ALEBRA 2 — *Mr. Hornick*

Algebra 2 is zipping through a little unit on correlation and linear regression. Before the end of February, along with ALEKS, we will be mathematically modeling.

ADVANCED MATH — *Mr. Hornick*

Advanced Math has commenced its study of Fourier Transforms with Fourier Series. Using the book *Who Is Fourier?*, this will keep us amazed and keep our minds stretched for several weeks.

GARAGE SCIENCE — *Mr. Hornick*

Garage Science has started to assess the quality of paper towels and to read Bill Bryson's *A Short History of Nearly Everything*.

Congratulations to Senior Brian Wendel

Senior Brian Wendel has been accepted into the National Youth Orchestra. Each summer, Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute brings together 120 of the brightest young musicians from across the country to form the National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America. Following a comprehensive audition process and a two-week training residency with leading professional orchestra musicians, these remarkable teenagers embark on a tour to some of the great music capitals of the world and serve as dynamic musical ambassadors.

This summer of 2013—the NYO-USA's inaugural season—the ensemble travels to Washington DC, Moscow, St. Petersburg, and London for performances with famed maestro Valery Gergiev and renowned violinist Joshua Bell. Summer 2014 will feature a coast to coast U.S. tour. This is an amazing honor, and a dream come true for Brian. He will be graduating in June and, after his exciting summer tour, plans to attend a conservatory school.

DRAMA CLUB PRESENTS**The Brothers Grimm****Spectaculathon****Fri and Sat, March 1 & 2****7:30 pm****Shea Theater**

It's time for the Drama Club production! This year's play is *The Brothers Grimm Spectaculathon*, a hilarious mash-up of dozens (hundreds?) of Brothers Grimm fairy tales. Students from all grades are acting in the play. We'd love to have you attend. Performances are at the Shea Theater on Friday March 1st and Saturday March 2nd at 7:30 pm. Tickets are \$7 in advance, \$9 at the door, and will be on sale in the Four Rivers school office or from any cast member starting February 11th.

NURSE'S NOTES

If your child is ill at school they will be assessed by me or Ms. Wood. We will then contact you for transportation. Please do not come to the school based on a text or phone call from your child.

Spring Intensives will be happening in April. All medications to be administered during overnight trips must have a **signed doctor's medication order form** which you can download from the school's website.

Hope you have had a safe and restful vacation.

Jeanne Milton, RN

jmilton@fourriverscharter.org

**VARIETY
SHOW
COMING UP!**

10th Annual**Variety Show****Friday, March 15, 7:00 pm****Shea Theater****Avenue A, Turners Falls**

Tickets \$7.00—Available in advance at the school office beginning March 4th and at the door.

SPORTS NEWS

The ultimate season will begin the week of March 18, field conditions permitting. The schedule is on the Four Rivers web site. Click on calendar and events and then click on sports calendar. All the practices, games, and directions to away games are there. The calendar is updated as the season goes along when changes have to be made due to weather and cancellations.

Sign-up sheets are at the office, or you can download them from the Friday Flash. Come to the office during parent conferences on March 6 and 7 to sign up for spring sports at that time if you want. Ms. Wood will be in the office to facilitate the sign-ups. There is a fee, but no student is turned away because of an inability to pay. Physicals within the last 13 months are required.

We have five teams, quality coaches, and a busy schedule. We make no cuts. Each athlete will be placed on the team that will help ensure a successful season. It is going to be competitive and fun. If you have questions feel free to e-mail me at tplotkin@fourriverscharter.org

Terry Plotkin, Athletic Director and Coach

COLLEGE COUNSELING NEWS

Colleges that have said YES! to our current senior class include....

Alfred, Beloit, Clark, Earlham, Emerson, Emmanuel, Framingham State, Gannon, Hampshire, Hartwick, Hofstra, Ithaca, Johnson State, Lasell, University of Maine, McDaniel, Manhattan College, Marlboro, University of New England, University of New Haven, UNC Asheville, Ohio Wesleyan, Principia, Simmons, Suffolk, Temple, UMass Amherst, UMass Boston, UMass Lowell, UVM, College of Wooster.

Juniors and the College Application Process

Junior seminar meets weekly and we are starting to focus on college research and resources that are available to help with identifying schools, deciding upon majors etc. Individual meetings with all juniors will take place over the next couple of months, ideally prior to the April break, which can be a great time to visit colleges. Also, mark your calendars for our annual college admissions evening. This year we will be hosting our :

College Information Evening on Wednesday, April 3rd at 7:00pm in the common room.

Our speaker for the evening will be Karen Kristoff, Senior Associate Director of Admissions at Smith College. Karen will provide insights and an overview of the college admissions process from the perspective of an admissions officer.

Finally, it's time to start thinking about standardized testing. We encourage all juniors to take the SAT's in May or June of their junior year and again early in senior year. We will be offering some SAT prep in both math and English and there are lots of good resources available online. All of the juniors have access to a college board account which offers test preparation resources, as well as a detailed breakdown of how they did on the PSAT's. In junior seminar we have also been looking at a free online program, Dome SAT Prep, which is available at <http://www.domesatreview.com/sat-prep-study-guide-tests> and offers a comprehensive range of free resources and study program. (It also offers a fee based pro/elite package, but the free one is adequate.)

SAT test dates and deadlines for registration are available at: <http://sat.collegeboard.org/home>

Question? Email astenson@fourriverscharter.org or call (413) 775 4577

INTRODUCING MICAH DEPPER—Student Teacher *by Ms. Stamas's Crew*

Mr. Depper is a graduate student at Antioch New England University in Keene, New Hampshire. He is working on his masters degree in Environmental Studies with a high school Biology teaching certification. He is at Four Rivers working with Ms. Stamas for a 15 week student teaching internship. After February break he will be teaching the 10th grade Biology classes. The students will be working with *C. elegans*, a nematode, that is a great hands-on model organism for learning genetics. Following are some questions that our crew asked Mr. Depper:

What brings you to Four Rivers and teaching in general? *I always wanted to help people to learn and think for themselves so that they can contribute positively to their community and be stewards of the environment.*

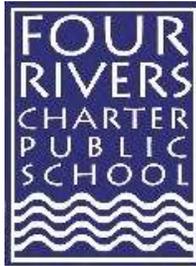
Where have you traveled outside of the United States? *I just got back from a trip to Cuba to study sustainable agriculture. I traveled abroad for half a year in New Zealand to study endangered flora and fauna.*

If you could be any vegetable or fruit what would you be and why? *I would be a rutabaga because it is earthy, nutritious, and a little sweet.*

If you were not in a science teaching program what would you be doing? *I would probably be working as an activist with an environmental organization.*



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

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

INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION on EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING
Monday, March 25— 4:00-5:00 pm
Four Rivers Common Room
SLIDE SHOW AND PRESENTATION by JESSICA SCIBELLI
The frontal lobe of the brain is responsible for planning, problem solving, movement and speech. All of these can be affected by executive function disorders. The school community is welcome to attend an informational presentation by Senior Jessica Scibelli. As part of her Senior Expedition final project Ms. Scibelli will talk about executive functions; what they are; common disorders; and information on where to find help.
Join us for this informative presentation. Tea and Treats will be served.