

Four Rivers Currents

June 2014

From the Principal's Desk...

ANNOUNCING STAFF CHANGES

With great appreciation for their service to Four Rivers, we thank Division 2 Math teacher Brian Hydefrost, Division 2 English teacher Jeff Dyer, ELL teacher Marian Kelner, and Academic Support Assistant (Americorps member) Evan Nemoff as they move on from Four Rivers to new adventures ahead.

Joining our team next year are:

John Schatz, Division 2 Math:

John is coming to us most directly from the Bahamas, where he has been the Head of School at the Island School after having different teaching and administrative responsibilities there. He taught Math and Science at the Academy at Charlemont for two years and taught Math at Beaver Country Day School outside of Boston. He also coached various sports in each of these schools. John has a B.S. in Mathematics and Environmental Science from Bucknell University and an M.A. in Education from Teacher's College, Columbia University.

Lisa Ritchie, Division 2 English:

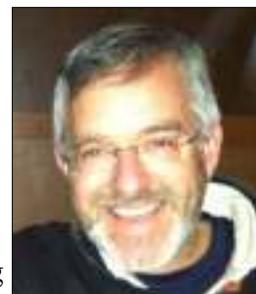
Lisa is returning to Four Rivers after earning her second masters degree. She has been teaching in the Exercise and Sport Studies department, as well as coaching cross country, at Smith College. Lisa taught 7th grade humanities at Four Rivers for two years and a short stint later filling in for half a year. Before that, she taught high school English and coached at an independent boarding school in Georgia. Lisa also worked three summers with Outward Bound, and for one year as an Americorps member in Washington state. She holds a B.A. in Comparative Literature from Brown University, an M.Ed. in English Education from Georgia State University, and an M.S. in Exercise and Sport Studies from Smith College.

Jenn Crocker, Academic Support Assistant (Americorps member):

Jenn just graduated from Mount Holyoke College with a degree in Philosophy. She joined Americorps and sought this position at Four Rivers from a general interest in education and youth. She worked as an intern at PeaceJam New England, an organization whose aim is inspire and equip youth to step up and actively engage in creating a future they can be proud of. She also worked as a volunteer for the Maine Volunteer Lawyers Project in Portland and as a Head Senior Camp Counselor with Saco Parks and Recreation.

We welcome these 3 fine individuals for their own next adventure.

In addition, **Robin Wilson** returns to teaching 8th grade after being on maternity leave for this past year. She and Jackie MacNeish will share the job of 8th grade Humanities, with Robin teaching Social Studies and Jackie teaching English and leading a crew. More details to follow in the fall.



Peter Garbus, Principal

Grade 8 News

JOURNEYS AND ENDINGS

The 8th grade has accomplished so much in the last month! We concluded our studies of the Hero's Journey, *The Alchemist*, and The Enlightenment with a Socratic Seminar. We celebrated our creative writing with a Writer's Cafe. We investigated rites of passage in different cultures, went on field work to the Path of Life Garden, designed our own Passage Ceremony, and prepared for our Passage Presentations. It has been a whirlwind of excitement, sorrow, looking back, looking ahead, and of course, humor and fun!

Eighth grade culminates with The Passage Expedition. Part of that expedition leads to the 8th Grade Passage Presentation, and another part leads to the creation of a unique Passage Ceremony by the students in the grade. The third component, related to Math and Science, is the Cardboard Boat Challenge.

THE CARDBOARD BOAT CHALLENGE

It started with a hike *around* a body of water (remember Wendell?).

Now it's time for a passage across.

With your team, design and build a cardboard boat that can carry you across a 50 yard course at the DAR Forest lake. You may use cardboard, glue, and paint as building materials. You must calculate the volume, the weight capacity, and the approximate waterline of your boat. Then, come up with a theme, paint the boat to the theme and wear costumes to match that theme. Boats launch on Thursday, June 12th!

Along with the pursuit of passage over the lake, students can win Style Awards, given out by community votes. This year's Style Awards and winners were:

Vogue Award for the most stylish boat and team--*S.O.S Porky* by Grace, Elliot, Tim and Ezra and *Water Get Out* by Juliet, Dylan, Caleb and Tori (right and right bottom)

More on page 10



IDEO Award for the most creative boat design--*The Bananaboat* by Michael, Peter, Nicky and Henry (left)



DIV 2 NEWS

U.S. HISTORY

Tenth grade history students held their incredible Celebration of Learning in Washington D.C. They performed vignettes about 20th and 21st century conflicts at corresponding national war monuments. Veterans, student groups, tourists, park rangers, and even police officers watched the extremely moving performances. It was an amazing experience for everyone! The day before the trip they performed their vignettes in a Theater in the Round style on the Four Rivers courtyard. Another highlight from our D.C. trip was time spent talking with our representative, Congressman Jim McGovern (*in the group photo at right*). Equally amazing!



Ninth graders held an amazing Celebration of Learning in Boston on Thursday, June 12th. After interviewing immigrants from western Massachusetts, researching the history of immigration, debating current immigration policy reform, and forming their own ideas about immigration, they focused on a particular issue that affects immigrants every day. They wrote petitions about education, equal pay, social services, food availability, secure communities, and gang violence. They spent time on the common getting their petitions signed and presented their ideas to state legislators in the Nurse's Hall at the statehouse. They did an amazing job and the presentations were more than well received.



9th
in
Boston



DIV 3 NEWS

JUNIORS SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER

As a culminating project in Mr. Wilson's World History class, with support from Mrs. Plath in English, juniors presented the powerful play *Speak Truth to Power: Voices From Beyond the Dark* on Thursday June 12th. The performance, held at the Amherst Regional High School and involving the entire junior class, tells the stories of human rights defenders from all parts of the world who have faced every form of oppression and abuse, but who hold in common a profound capacity to ignite change. The play examines issues as far ranging as political rights, free expression, honor killings, demilitarization, environmental activism, mental health, women's and children's rights, and national self-determination. The project grew from a book written by human rights advocate Kerry Kennedy, which inspired a moving and inspirational play by esteemed Chilean writer Ariel Dorfman.

The production is based on interviews and stories of courage gathered over two years by Ms. Kennedy, who interviewed an inspiring array of defenders from more than 36 countries and five continents. Her original book features 51 compelling stories of human rights defenders who are willing to stand up in the face of imminent danger, speak out and make a difference. *Speak Truth to Power* seeks to promote a more just and peaceful world by galvanizing public support for international human rights through cultural, educational and web-based programs. *Speak Truth* is a core program of the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights.

This play was made possible by a grant from the Mass Cultural Council, which enabled us to partner with renowned theater expert Court Dorsey. Court worked intensely with the students for four weeks to prepare them for this performance. In class, students researched the various defenders they were embodying to help bring those people's voices to the stage with truth and authenticity.

All proceeds from the performance were donated to the Karuna Center for Peacebuilding in Amherst, a local organization working to bring about global change through their work on conflict transformation and community reconciliation in over 25 countries.

During a talkback after the play, students shared their own experiences with the production and the content, expressing the kind of powerful, authentic learning we value at Four Rivers. They weren't the only ones affected, though. One audience member told the group, "I'll never forget what you shared here tonight."

For more information on the Karuna Center, visit [ka-runacenter.org](http://karunacenter.org).

RIGHT ~ Students in Mr. Hornick's Applied Math class are making ledger entries of moves in a game of Monopoly that will provide the data for balance sheets and income statements.



GRADUATION 2014

The following story is from remarks made by Principal Peter Garbus at the school's graduation ceremony on June 7, 2014.

GREAT MOMENTS -- WRAPPED IN SMALL ONES

For our final Currents of the year, I'd like to share with everyone a story I read at Graduation. I love the idea that great moments are not only those that change the world or involve heroism. It seems to me empowering that small day to day actions can have positive impact on a single individual, thus making it a great moment. Each one of can do something like that, just by being patient, holding back our frustrations or anger, and reaching out, even in small ways.

A New York City Taxi driver wrote:

I arrived at the address and honked the horn. After waiting a few minutes I honked again. Since this was going to be my last ride of my shift I thought about just driving away, but instead I put the car in park and walked up to the door and knocked.. 'Just a minute', answered a frail, elderly voice. I could hear something being dragged across the floor.

After a long pause, the door opened. A small woman in her 90's stood before me. She was wearing a print dress and a pillbox hat with a veil pinned on it, like somebody out of a 1940's movie.

By her side was a small nylon suitcase. The apartment looked as if no one had lived in it for years. All the furniture was covered with sheets.

There were no clocks on the walls, no knickknacks or utensils on the counters. In the corner was a cardboard box filled with photos and glassware.

'Would you carry my bag out to the car?' she said. I took the suitcase to the cab, then returned to assist the woman.

She took my arm and we walked slowly toward the curb.

She kept thanking me for my kindness. 'It's nothing', I told her.. 'I just try to treat my passengers the way I would want my mother to be treated.'

'Oh, you're such a good boy, she said. When we got in the cab, she gave me an address and then asked, 'Could you drive through downtown?'

'It's not the shortest way,' I answered quickly..

'Oh, I don't mind,' she said. 'I'm in no hurry. I'm on my way to a hospice.

I looked in the rear-view mirror. Her eyes were glistening. 'I don't have any family left,' she continued in a soft voice. 'The doctor says I don't have very long.' I quietly reached over and shut off the meter.

'What route would you like me to take?' I asked.

For the next two hours, we drove through the city. She showed me the building where she had once worked as an elevator operator.

We drove through the neighborhood where she and her husband had lived when they were newlyweds. She had me pull up in front of a furniture warehouse that had once been a ballroom where she had gone dancing as a girl.

Sometimes she'd ask me to slow in front of a particular building or corner and would sit staring into the darkness, saying nothing.

As the first hint of sun was creasing the horizon, she suddenly said, 'I'm tired. Let's go now'. We drove in silence to the address she had given me. It was a low building, like a small convalescent home, with a driveway that passed under a portico.

Two orderlies came out to the cab as soon as we pulled up. They were solicitous and intent, watching her every move. They must have been expecting her.

I opened the trunk and took the small suitcase to the door. The woman was already seated in a wheelchair.

'How much do I owe you?' She asked, reaching into her purse.

'Nothing,' I said.

'You have to make a living,' she answered.

'There are other passengers,' I responded.

Almost without thinking, I bent and gave her a hug. She held onto me tightly.

'You gave an old woman a little moment of joy,' she said. 'Thank you.'

I squeezed her hand, and then walked into the dim morning light.. Behind me, a door shut. It was the sound of the closing of a life..

I didn't pick up any more passengers that shift. I drove aimlessly lost in thought. For the rest of that day, I could hardly talk. What if that woman had gotten an angry driver, or one who was impatient to end his shift? What if I had refused to take the run, or had honked once, then driven away?

On a quick review, I don't think that I have done anything more important in my life. We're conditioned to think that our lives revolve around great moments. But great moments often catch us unaware - beautifully wrapped in what others may consider a small one.

Have a good summer everyone.

ALUMNI NEWS

Class of '08

Kyle Deaver graduated from the University of Vermont and is now earning his EMT and planning to attend med school.

Sean Seaman, a wildland brush fire-fighter, is working toward his EMT-B at Greenfield Community College.

Evan White Tolbert is studying music at GCC, planning to transfer to UMass to major in business and minor in Japanese. He would like to translate Japanese for various media or be an English teacher in Japan.

Class of '09

Amasa Fiske-White is studying Natural History and Traditional Living Skills at Sterling College. He has enjoyed travelling to Yosemite, Oregon, Washington, Arizona, James Bay (Canada) and Belize.

Rhiannon Carlton just graduated from UMass, and is hoping to work in the teaching or medical profession. Highlights of her last year include a semester abroad in Kigali, Rwanda as an elementary school teacher, with a side-visit to Spain.

Class of '10

Alexis Huston graduated from Fitchburg State and is looking for work as a teacher.

Class of '11

Tamisha Cutler is enrolled at Greenfield Community College.

Ayla Daniels is at Mount Holyoke College studying creative writing and poetry.

Mari Roulston has been travelling with Ringling Bros. Circus, now attends GCC, and is pursuing a career that combines performance, travel and writing.

Andrew Schick is a Physics and Math major at UMass, with a minor in Japanese. His most interesting experience since leaving Four Rivers was a west coast back-packing trip.

Class of '12

Troy Harrington-Woodard is studying international relations at Tufts University, and thinking about the next step (perhaps grad school or law school). He says about Tufts: "I love the classes that make me think in interdisciplinary ways—just like at Four Rivers."

Carin Allman-Wales, a new transfer to Marlboro College this fall, spent the spring semester in Barcelona. She is double majoring in Environmental Studies and Political Communication.

Class of '13

Maggie Walton is at Wheaton College studying studio art and literature. Highlights since leaving Four Rivers include a trip to Honduras and Guatemala with **Jamila Roth** and tutoring 4th & 5th graders.

Alysha Boynton is at Emerson college and planning a career in the television industry. Highlight of her year—Will Ferrell visiting Emerson to promote his new movie!

2014 Graduates



THE GRADUATES *In front, row 1: Brian Cruz.*

Kneeling, row 2: Grace Walker, Katie Soltysik, Helen Perham, Sebastian Arruda, Jake Waldsmith, Evan Graves, Taylor Chapin and Angie Flynn.

Crouching, row 3: Clay Derderian, Ivy Noonan, Emi Link, Alynna Tan, Sweeney, Isabel Margola, Juliana Blodgett, and Sophie Buchanan.

Standing, back row: Tyler LaPointe, Courtney Benoni, Tilyr Gannon, Frederic Rigollaud, Sullivan Fraser, Jackson Reeves-Henning, Rachel Carow, Alex Stenson, Asher Kenen, Nicole Zabawa, Blake Porter, Chandler Thoma, and Genlyne Fiske-White. Not shown, Kennedy Strakose-Hagen., Ben Michel.

WHAT WILL THEY BE DOING NEXT YEAR?

Work, Travel and School! In the fall our grads will be heading to:

American University (D.C.), Champlain College, Clark University, Fashion Institute of Technology, Franklin Pierce University, Greenfield Community College, Hampshire College, Ithaca College, Lasell College, Lesley University Art Institute, Middlebury College, Mount Holyoke College, Simmons College, Smith College, SUNY Fredonia, Syracuse University, Unity College, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, University of Rhode Island, travel to Brazil, work as a lumberjack, build a Tiny House. Best Wishes!

8th Grade JOURNEYS AND ENDINGS continued from page 3....



Otter Pride Award for the most spirited team--S.S. Sunshine by Fiona, Abby S. and Abby M. (left)

Titanic Award for the most spectacular sinking boat by Oshen, Jacob and Kieron (below left)

Travel On Award for the boat that is most durable and able to be used again and again--S.S. Boat Nectar by Matt, Milou and Shayla (below)



The launch!

Good luck sailors!

The photos below are from Path of Life Garden in Vermont, which the students visited in June as they thought about their passage ceremony.



COLLEGE COUNSELING & GUIDANCE

Juniors, are you wondering what to do with all that summer spare time? How about:

Read a good book! Need some ideas? The College Board's "101 Great Books Recommended for College-Bound Readers" list is here:

https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/21804.101_Great_Books_Recommended_for_College_Bound_Readers

- How about a few minutes each day doing some SAT prep? There are lots of good resources on the College Board website. Don't forget about your MyCollegeQuickstart account which provides targeted test preparation based on your PSAT scores.
- Work! Save some money for college and demonstrate that you are reliable, responsible and hard working!
- Take a class at a local college or take a pre-college summer program.
- Visit colleges. Take campus tours and talk with admissions counselors.
- Create a résumé—a record of your accomplishments, activities and work experiences since you started high school.
- Look at the schools on your college list in Naviance. Update the list as you discover new schools that you are interested in and remove schools that don't seem right.
- Thinking about Early Decision or Early Action? If yes, you should be coming back to school in September with a good idea as to where you are planning to apply.

Relax! Go to the beach, have fun, kick back and prepare yourself for your senior year!

Questions over the summer? You can always email Mr. Stenson!

astenson@fourriverscharter.org, 413 775-4577 ext. 222

Alumni News continued from page 8

Class of '13

Paul Belino finds studying mechanical engineering at Rochester Inst. of Technology difficult but fun.

Laura Campbell is at Simmons College majoring in Public Relations/ Marketing. Her most interesting experience since leaving Four Rivers—working with the Special Olympics hosting tournaments in Boston.

Maggie White finished a semester at Framingham State and is now off wwoofing (World Wide Opportunities in Organic Farming) in Italy, and planning to visit Ireland and Switzerland.

Levi Howard just finished his first year at Alfred University studying mechanical engineering. He is exploring careers in sound projection.

Winston Galt is at Hartwick College and wants to be a genetic engineer. If that doesn't work out he'll go walking around the country. Says he, "Introspective moments abound."

SPORTS UPDATE

Last Call for the Four Rivers Summer Ultimate Intensive, running June 30 - July 3. Details can be found at: www.fourriverscharter.org. Click on *Our Programs*, click on *Summer Ultimate Intensive*. If you have questions contact Terry Plotkin, Athletic Director, at the school at 775-4577, ext. 218. OR tplotkin@fourriverscharter.org.

Soccer sign-ups for the fall will take place on or just before registration day, August 25th.

Blatchford Garden News

This summer we'll enjoy our first crop of mulberries in late June (tree planted '11), strawberries, apples (planted '11), and Bartlett pears in the rain garden (planted '13). Keep your eyes peeled! Students, staff, parents and community members are welcome at any time to come harvest burdock, sunchoke, chickweed, nettles, cattails, blackberries, rhubarb and other abundant delights. If you are interested in helping with some summer maintenance in exchange for produce or gardening space, or would like a tour or orientation, or need some perennial veggie divisions for your home, contact Felix: Bufonia1@aol.com. ~ *Felix Lufkin*

NURSE'S NOTES

All students entering grades 7 and 10 must have a physical exam per Massachusetts law.

Students playing sports must have a doctor's physical on file with the school nurse that is no older than 13 months.

ANY student taking a daily medication at **home or school** must have a medication authorization form completed by their physician. The form can be found at:

http://www.fourriverscharter.org/docs/Medication_Order_Form.pdf

A separate form is needed for each medication. Medication administration forms must be submitted by August 18th. These forms are necessary for day and overnight field work excursions. You can call the school and leave me a message or e-mail questions to me at :

jmilton@fourriverscharter.org

Jeanne Milton, RN



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

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.