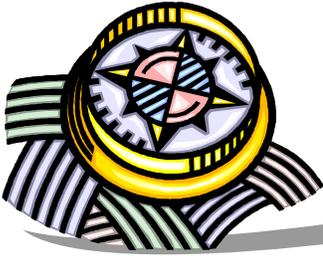


Community Skills Program

Newsletter

Chittenden South Supervisory Union



“Charting a new course for youth”

Fall 2005

CAREER START PROGRAM EXPANDS JOB SERVICES at CVU

We are pleased to announce that CVU is the recipient of the Vocational Rehabilitation Career Start grant. Career Start expands job services to teens in the high school who may require job counseling, job seeking assistance, or help linking to adult services. Last year we were awarded in March a small Grant from the state-wide initiative linked to the department of Labor and Vocational Rehabilitation. This October, we received a second award to continue the program.

Career Start offers year round services to youth with disabilities or other challenges (504 plan), age 14-21:

- Work Search assistance
- Job Placement and follow-along
- Transition Planning support
- Post-secondary or vocational school links
- Summer Employment Support
- Registration and links to VR and other adult agency services

Mary McClements was hired last Spring to

fill the role as Career Start Coordinator. No stranger to CVU or the local community, Mary was a former art teacher at CVU and also the proprietor of the Spring House School for Arts. She brings with her tremendous skills in working with youth, abundant enthusiasm and great creativity helping youth problem solve life challenges. In addition to her growing caseload, Mary is currently hosting two 8 week workshops in Employability Skills at the Life Program off-campus alternative program and at CVU.

Career Start is the long-awaited sister program to the CSSU Community Skills Program. The Community Skills Program provides long-term multi-year services to students with learning impairments or significant barriers to employment.

In the brief six months Career Start has been at CVU over 40 students have been assisted: 3 were helped in attending college, 16 were found paid employment, and 17 are currently attending job skills classes.

You can reach Mary at 482-7196 Monday—Wednesday. Referrals may be made by parents or members of the CSSU education community.

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LOOKING FOR US?... We have moved!

No one really keeps track of this stuff but us. But we need to tell you. Since our program inception way back in '87, we have moved nine times, which we figure is about every other year. We can tell you some great stories about the places we have holed up, how many people we have had in our closet, er, I mean office, and why one year we seriously considered a battered RV as a possibility. (We still like that idea... classroom space, rides for students to work, tea breaks and a nice place for students during fire drills...) Serving five schools has always been a challenge. But someone was looking out for us and we

have a little more than a strong feeling that a famous former principal rallied for us one last time and gave us as permanent a space as anyone has here.

We are now officially situated near the Guidance Offices off the Learning Center at CVU. Centrally located, near the computer lab and coke machine all at the same time! We have an official plastic engraved sign. And amazingly, it is quite RV-ish as we were left kitchen cabinets and a sink in our office! Now if only we could get a futon and coffee table through the door...

Shelburne Community School: Pitching Hay and Learning Computer Graphics

Sue Schaefer is an amazing woman. Ask the students scraping gourds or rebuilding radios in her small classroom. She believes whole heartedly in tapping into students successes.

She is also responsible for securing the grant that brought several computers, a color printer, scanner and PhotoShop software into SCS. As a Behavior Specialist, she was awestruck by the way students with their video-gaming skills could translate their skills to a computer graphics program. Students with challenging behaviors or attention disorders were suddenly successful at focusing and creating amazing school products.

When Sue met the talented computer-savvy artist Lish Kroll, a Community Skills Program staff member, inspiration struck! By combining their efforts (Sue plowing ahead to get resources and Lish patiently teaching students vocational skills) a whole new enterprise was created. Now with two groups in her charge, Lish teaches six students weekly how to use the powerful graphics program. The program is in it's second year.

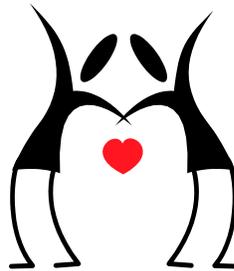
Justin Provencher, Jonathan Lyons and Thomas Gibbs are a few of the students involved in the Photo-Shop training. They are taking their new talents to the next level by creating greeting cards that they will sell as fundraisers for the middle school program Learning can

be such fun that the students nearly forget it's educational. Jonathan said, "this is better than school" as he worked away on his design.

But not all students are the sit-down, peck, drag and create type so Lish found other links for students. Two spectacularly successful partnerships exist at the Shelburne Museum and Shelburne Farms. Aaron Malaney feeds sheep, changes water buckets and throws hay with a great crew of farm workers. It's Aaron's first time working on a farm and he still gets excited before leaving school.

Jonathan Hall, an 8th grade student, is busy with the grounds crew at the Shelburne Museum. On his first day, he located his supervisors vagrant walkie-talkie. John likes joking around with the grounds crew, riding in the truck and being a part of a great team of flannel clad outdoors people. He works hard with pride and enthusiasm.

Having staff like Sue Schaefer connected to the Community Skills Program helps amplify program services, creates a home base for students and a center for communication. Lish has done an outstanding job of using this springboard to create a great middle school program to help develop a base of skills before stepping up to CVU.



CVU Career Explorers: On-the Road Again

Real life experiences, hands-on activities and topics that are very real to students, are the hallmark of Career Explorers. One class has been on five job tours, participated in two work crews (working for class donations for field trips) and has explored their work strengths in the classroom. The other class, has been busy practicing interviewing skills by creating their own video version of Interview Blunders and then participating in real interviews with guest business people. A recent hot topic was "First Impressions" where students engaged in a heated discussion of when individual identity collided with working world ex-

pectations. Both classes participate in monthly outdoor adventures to assist in the development of social skills and celebrate their accomplishments.

The classes help prepare 9th and 10th grade students for employment. Many students establish a strong link to the staff and program and continue later with more individualized services. Sharon Ogden teaches in both classes which is co-instructed by other program staff.



Williston Central School: **Roving Explorers**

Tim Provost and JP Feldman are good friends who love to get out on the town together. Tim says there's nothing better than hunting for old stuff and JP says he is always happy to be on the move. The two WCS students spend a morning a week, exploring jobs, visiting community resources or participating in a recreational activity. Last week, the energetic pair participated in a community scavenger hunt on Church Street in Burlington. Starting at the YMCA the two students were challenged to perform many different tasks from purchasing cocoa in a vending machine to locating their birth certificates to pinpointing the departure time of the next city bus for Williston. It was a fast forward education in community independence! They said it was "awesome!"

The two students have visited ReCycle North, The Vermont Teddy Bear, CVU and several community businesses and services. . They

have attempted sailing a boat, and had a stellar morning bowling. Peggy MacDonald says the goal for many middle school students in the program is to develop a good sense of their community, a career vocabulary and basic work skills. Enhanced self-confidence in their transition to the high school is always a tremendous bonus.



Two other WCS students are busy in the program. Ryan Martell is producing artwork for his own line of greeting cards! Dani Demag is getting out to explore her community. All students are on different paths to the same goal, increased confidence and competence in negotiating their community and the world of work.

NEW! Friday Teen Adventure Club

Two years ago we started a Summer Adventure Club for students who were placed on job sites through our work program. Every week during the summer, the young employees met for a day-long outdoor adventure with staff. Students had the opportunity to perform community service, develop friendships, have some fun and build social skills. Staff had the opportunity to check-in on students, keep tabs on work sites and also have some fun. The model has been so successful that we asked ourselves, "why not keep it going through the school year?"

We invited students in our CVU Career Explorers Class to join the gang. Of course, it's a lot harder taking students out during the school year...so the group meets once a month on a Friday. Sharon Ogden and Peggy MacDonald co-lead the group. Last month, Gretchen Cochrane, Brad Chamberlain, Sam Alger, Natasha Sprano and Ryan Mallette climbed

Snake Mountain on a gray Friday. They were awarded with a partial lifting of the clouds revealing the Adirondacks and Lake Champlain. We located towns we knew and watched as turkey vultures floated past. After picnicking on sandwiches, students hiked down at a steady clip, loaded up and were back just in time for 4th block.

Sam and Brad wished out loud that school could be this cool everyday. Next month, students will go bowling and out for lunch. They are raking leaves and stacking firewood to raise money for the club. The group is positive, hardworking and forming friendships fast. Now how cool is that?



Program Staff: News and Notes

Here's the latest!

- **Jake Rutter is our newest staff member.** He has had extensive experience working with youth at the King Street Youth Center, Camp Dudley and residential youth programs. He is an athlete, literary scholar, music expert, trivia king, father (currently and expecting) and newlywed. Welcome Jake!
- **Sharon Ogden is alive and well and we're so happy she's here!** She is busy coaching young girls in soccer and basketball, doing some roof-shingling on the side and has opened a new age-guessing booth in our office. Step right in, she's an expert at putting your age right in it's place. She lives with her adventurous family in a hand-crafted house in Monkton.
- **Alicia Kroll is back for her fourth year! Yea!** She continues to create art for the Shelburne Museum, garden, care for many dogs and take the lead in providing program services at Shelburne Community School. She lives in Charlotte with her husband and young daughter.
- **Mary McClements joined our group last Spring as the Career Start Coordinator.** Mary is a former art educator who is excited by the new challenges of her unique job. She loves outdoors sports, working with youth, and art-making. She lives with her husband and two young children in Charlotte.

**Chittenden South Supervisory
Union**

Community Skills Program
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The Community Skills program is sponsored by Chittenden South Supervisory Union. It provides:

- ◆ *Community Access and Training*
- ◆ *Transition Planning and Adult Services Links*
- ◆ *Community-based Vocational Skills Training*
- ◆ *Social-recreational programming*
- ◆ *Adapted Career and Life Skills Classes*

for students receiving special education services in grades 7-12 district wide.

A program that's
● WORKING!

The Flip Side: When is a car, a bus?

When it has students in it!

You might be surprised to see a small blue car heading out of CVU with a large school bus sign and lights perched on top. We get the same reaction as drivers pass us down the road, a surprised look and then a shift to complete confusion. There are several vehicles at CVU and CSSU that now have full signs and lights. What happened?

The school district has leased a few vehicles a year to support many community-based programs including Community Skills for quite some time. They were just invisible, tucked in with all the other parking lot cars. But now you can't help but notice them. Giant lights and words are attached like plastic antlers.

A new law, Act 29, passed by the legislature in the beginning of the summer, requires that all vehicles used by the district have bus lights and signs. Act 29 also requires that everyone driving these vehicles be school bus endorsed. That meant at least 15 staff at CVU were scrambling for a small "V" sticker on their license. ("V" for Victory? No, it's for van.)

We're not going to grumble here about the problems that has caused state-wide as schools have scrambled to meet compliance sans

funding. We won't belly ache about the training, the expense, the giant twist in our programming tights...Whoops, I'm grumbling.

To the credit of CSSU, a whole lot of people rolled up their sleeves and tackled the problem together. Bob Mason at the district office suddenly had a new role he never dreamed about. Staff who never guessed they'd become Class II van drivers are suddenly taking bus training classes. Hart and Mead unexpectedly became expert installers. And administrators combed through budgets looking for any way to scrape together the unexpected costs. All this activity in 12 short weeks is starting to see some serious results. Students are traveling to their vocational programs, DUO sites and special education services.

Now someone just needs to educate the rest of the world that, yes, that really is a bus. So, stop! When those red lights flash!
-P.M.

