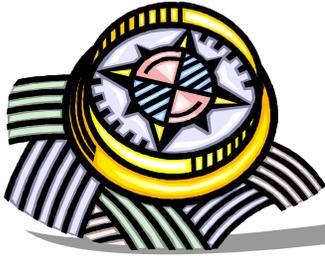


# Community Skills Program

## Newsletter

Chittenden South Supervisory Union



“Charting a new course for youth”

Winter 2007

### Community Skills CVU Work Crew: *On the Road to Success*

Five boys and two teachers arrive at the property of Joan Robinson on Hayward Street in Burlington. Joan heard about the work crew on the internet and is an enthusiastic supporter of alternative education initiatives.

The crew meet with Joan and get their instructions; It's a tall order, remove about ten 20-40' trees to open up the backyard. Cut and stack firewood. Move the smaller brush out to the woods. Sharon Ogden, Crew Leader turns to the boys and gives them the condensed version of their job orders. "Boys, get the gloves and tools! Follow me!" The enthusiastic herd run over to the van and gear up for work. This is school for 3 hours every other day for the five-some.

The boys quickly take to their natural positions on the crew, Brad Chamberlain is strong and skilled, works quietly on the tougher wood. Sean Poulin has immense energy and works hard at moving the branches. Usually, one boy shifts to a lead

crew position. The teachers rove about assisting and coaching through the project. It is their fifth work project in as many weeks and the boys clearly know the drill.

Jake Rutter, a program assistant, starts bucking the beefier wood with a chain saw while the boys attack the slimmer sections with hand saws and loppers. The wood is green and resists cutting but the boys determination is greater. After two solid hours of work, six trees are toppled, firewood is neatly stacked and sun is shining into a formerly shady edge of the yard. The homeowner is stunned and joyous over the progress. It will take just one more afternoon to complete the project.

One week later the crew is working on a fence demolition project at the home of Nina Chill. They've proven themselves to be experts in this area and far prefer a sledge to a paintbrush. An aged stockade fence, ten sections long with rotted leaning posts

*Cont. next page...*

#### Some articles Inside this issue:

We're 20!	2
Work Crew cont.	2
Williston Central School	3
Centennial Field Internship	3
Middle Schools	3
Summer Adventures	4

**NEW**  
Partners Club  
Schedule Inside

### Occupational Training Partnerships gain traction

Teaching a student job skills that can translate readily into employment opportunities is a challenge we face every year. Although some job placements may be basic skills or confidence builders, some of our older students need an intensive training opportunity with ample opportunity to learn specific trade skills and employment skills. Those opportunities can be as rare as a November snowstorm in Vermont these days.

Several local non-profits have laid down the wel-

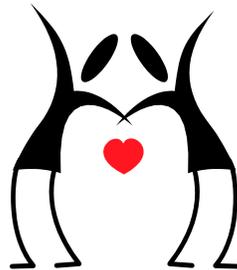
come mat to students and really moved forward with skills training to make a difference in students lives and the life of our community. **Recycle North** has taken a lead position in training youth providing training to 5 CVU students in the areas of appliance repair, computer service. Building materials management and retail skills. Students are supervised, coached and evaluated as they progress through a trade specific occupational training program.

*Cont. next page...*

# Community Skills Program: 20 years of Building Capacity

This year the Community Skills Program is officially 20 years old with its inception in 1987 when three students with learning impairments were welcomed back from a regional "Diversified Occupations" Program. Those twenty years contain a lot of changes: Support Services district-wide have changed immeasurably based on the needs and growth of the district and its students. One of the most important elements of the program is its flexibility while maintaining its mission to provide equal opportunity to all students to develop and learn the skills necessary to be contributing members of our community.

What difference has 20 years made?



## WORK CREW continued from Page 1

sags before them. Not much instruction is needed, before the teachers talk the project through one boy lifts a fence post out of the ground. Here, Cameron Burnor, helps the boys problem solve the break-up of the fence to trailer size pieces. All raw wood is brought to the Burlington Intervale for recycling. In one hour, the crew has finished the bulk of the work and will return in two days to load a trailer. The home owner looks on in awe and remarks that the crew has saved them a weekend of work.

The Work Crew accept donations for their work to pay for field trips and incentives for the youth.

The crew completes the Community Work Crew portion of the learning program in late November, next they will each participate in an intensive Occupational Training Program at Recycle North. (See article this newsletter!) Recycle North will host each student in a specialized learning program related to a trade occupation. Here the boys will learn appliance repair, computer repair, construction trade and retail skills.

In April, the boys will return to working for others before getting assistance from staff in locating paid summer jobs.

To hire the crew this Spring, call our office at: 482-7196

## Centennial Field and Lake Monsters host of Summer Work Crew

Brad Chamberlain and Gary Cheeseman will tell you it was one of their best summers ever. For six weeks last summer, three CVU students participated in a unique 20-day work internship at Centennial Field. The boys worked under the guidance of Community Skills staff member Jake Rutter who had arranged the opportunity for the students in collaboration with Linking Learning to Life at Burlington High School.

The crew learned to: work as a team, be responsible for getting their jobs done and learn about the nuts and bolts of maintaining a large sports field. There was bucket loads of dark green paint in action all summer as the students slathered the bleachers with a fresh coat.

There were many extras that the students were excited about: pizza at lunch from the snack bar, game tickets and the chance to be a part of the action on the field.

Once a week, the students put their tools away and participated in an enrichment experience that ranged from a banking skills workshop instructed by Vermont Federal Credit Union to negotiating Church Street in a wheelchair in a Disability Awareness activity.

All participants were paid wages through incentive funds through the Department of Labor. DOL Youth Counselor, Christine Sheldon praised the program as achieving the kind of goals they hope for in youth.



## Occupational Training, cont. from Page 1

A new student opportunity developed this past year at **Bike Recycle of Vermont**. Bike Recycle reconditions hundreds of donated bicycles and then offers the bikes back to the refugee and homeless community. Sam Alger, a sophomore, participated in a volunteer internship and learned a lot of the basics of bike repair. After working for several months, Sam was able to Earn-a-Bike and spent two afternoons building a bike for himself.

Other non-profits that have been stalwart hosts over the years even though their role may not be defined as youth training sites, the experiences can be crafted to achieve these



goals in a welcoming and creative partnership.

Local "regulars" include **Shelburne Museum** and **Shelburne Farms**. Program participants from Shelburne Community School and CVU have an opportunity to develop agricultural or landscape management skills.

Not far down the road, the **Greater Burlington Humane Society** has provided many opportunities to youth over the years. Students have the opportunity to participate in a 1/2 day volunteer training before interning to provide animal care.

Area non-profits have provided rich occupation training opportunities for many students in the district.

## Middle Schools

**Chittenden South Supervisory  
Union**

Community Skills Program  
C/O Champlain Valley Union H.S.  
369 CVU Road  
Hinesburg, VT 05461  
1-802-482-7196

*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!**

## Summer Adventure Program 2007

Every year in Vermont, in every school, a group of students receive Extended Year Services or EYP. This is not for students who are failing, it is for students who require summer programming to maintain paid jobs, keep current with academic skills or meet some measure of “serious need” to maintain independence. The services are federally mandated and usually involves a relatively small group of students.

For CSSU, that represents about 2% of our students. Or 10-30 students in each school! For the Community Skills Program Students, about 1/4 of our students receive summer programs just by the function of who the program is designed to serve.

The wonderful part about Summer Program Services is the amount of flexibility and creativity it allows. We may be required to teach academic skills but how we achieve this is left open-ended. Students who stay-on in Community Skills are here for one of 3 reasons: occupational skills, social skills or community independence.

Peggy MacDonald, Program Coordinator, says it's a “Fantastic challenge and opportunity. We don't have a full picture of which students qualify and will participate until late April; once we do know, we have to work fast to create opportunities.” One way MacDonald and Sharon Ogden, Assistant Coordinator, have addressed the issue is to set-up a weekly Outdoor Adventure Group throughout the summer.

