



Vermont Reading Partners

A Volunteer Literacy Program

Student-Tutor Newsletter, March 2010

Literacy Soars

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On December 11, 1985, an article appeared in the *Grandville Sentinel* under the headline "Pawlet volunteers ready to help those desiring to read better." It explained that Rosamund Neilson, founder of Volunteers of the Pawlet Adult Reading Program, had announced that volunteers had completed an intensive 20-hour training program and were ready to offer their services "free to adults" who would like to improve their reading skills. The Pawlet Volunteers were an affiliate, the only one in Vermont, of Literacy Volunteers [of America], a 33-year-old national organization with 218 affiliates in 32 states, according to the paper. Among the 16 original tutors in 1985 was Madeline Rockwell who is still a consultant to the organization that would become Vermont Reading Partners.

Today, as it celebrates twenty-five years of literacy, VRP is an accredited affiliate of ProLiteracy, originally Literacy Volunteers of America, which has 1200 affiliates around the world. It offers adults and families, free of charge, an array of programs to fit their needs including Adult basic reading, writing, and math, GED study, English as another language, and Family Literacy. A School Program begun in 1999 is offered to ten area schools, with forty-two students enrolled this year who meet one on one once a week with their tutors. Funded solely by community donations and small grants, VRP strives to fulfill the vision of its founder Roz Neilson by serving those who seek personal freedom through increased literacy skills. Vermont Reading Partners is proud to continue her work.



Learn to read is the caption of this 1987 photo of Roz with balloons bearing the slogan "Support Our Adult Readers" (SOAR). Balloons were distributed in downtown Manchester.

Our Twenty-fifth Year

Read-Ins Central to VRP's Literacy Awareness Month

Fisher Elementary School had an enjoyable and successful Read-In on February 26 as part of VRP's Literacy Awareness Month as well as a nation-wide incentive. Principal Deanne Lacoste announced that everyone should stop what they were doing and read for thirty minutes. Teachers, parents, and students read and shared their reading and learning. Students in Jeremy Pratico's fifth grade class were asked, "What did they think of the read-in?" Maggie Smith responded, "It was silent and everyone was reading."

Evan Rogers commented, "It was pretty fun. We all sat down and read. Everyone was calm. I like reading so it was fun." Riley Lane enthusiastically responded, "I caught up on my reading, *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. It was quiet. I felt relaxed. I know the more reading kids do, the more kids become interested in books."

The Read-In was in recognition of the National Education Association's (NEA) Read Across America Day. This event, now in its eighth year, generates enthusiasm for reading nationwide and focuses the country's attention on how important it is to motivate children to read. Fisher planned to continue their reading initiative during the month of March.

--Donna Bazyk



Fisher Kindergartners searching an *I Spy* book



Mom sharing an Encyclopedia with Fisher Kindergarten students.

Students, teachers, and community members participated in the third annual Read-In at MEMS this year. Once again students could be found reading alone, with a partner and in groups. There was lots of excitement when the Read-In began in Mr. Schatz's first grade, as pairs of students looked around for the perfect book to read. Then a quiet buzz took over the room as children and adults settled into their books. Another successful Read-In!

--Sarah Post

Instead of a Read-In at Currier Memorial School February 24, students woke up to a snow day. But the Read-In was held the next day to everyone's delight.



VRP ESOL Program at Bromley

The snow has arrived and with it come the lift operators, ski rental assistants, housekeepers and other workers from South America. This year, they are college students from Peru, Brazil and Chile, speaking Spanish, Portuguese, and textbook English. They have all paid a lot of money to be able to come to the U.S. to work so they can experience our lives here, improve their English, and gain an understanding of our culture.

This is where VRP comes in. Every Tuesday a group of at least four volunteers arrives at Bromley lodge at 4:00 p.m. where we gather to meet with any workers who are interested in practicing their conversational language skills and share stories of their lives in their home countries as well as life here in Vermont.

We begin in a large group discussing any issues regarding their work at Bromley. For example, one student cut his hand and had to go to the clinic. They were all amazed at how they were treated there. "I felt that I was important and they cared about me as an individual." This led to a discussion of health care in their home countries – the benefits and problems here and there.

Then we break into small groups so each student will have the best opportunity to talk, read or ask questions. Tutors supply various forms of reading materials, which they read and discuss. One student found an article about her home town in Peru. How great it was to learn from her and open the lesson this way.

We're not sure who gains the most from these sessions – the students or the tutors? We know we all feel honored to be able to help these bright, energetic young people to learn a bit about our country and to have an opportunity to learn more about their worlds. One student from Brazil told one of the tutors in private, "Thank you, these lessons are so important to me. I work my schedule out so that I can attend these sessions. This is why I came to America to learn your language better." --Betsy Butler and Chris Wetzel



Bromley ESOL students and tutors 2009-2010



Brown Bagging It

On Wednesday, March 3, seventeen tutors met at The Bank of Bennington conference room in Manchester to eat their lunch while discussing tutor experiences. Tutors from Adult Literacy, ESOL, and the School Program were in attendance. Tutors shared their thoughts and techniques, successes and failures. As it turned out, success was the word of the day as tutors told stories about their student's accomplishments. In the School Program one tutor has a Magic Can that holds magic words as well as a magic treat or two. Another told of finding the key to her student's success which was not handing out stickers, but counting and writing down the number of pages the student had read at each session. On the adult side, tutors told about their experiences with the Bromley International/English as another language students. Tutors and students meet weekly to discuss American language and culture. An adult Basic literacy tutor told about the difficulty her student has, some days, concentrating on her studies for a GED with so many life problems knocking on her door. The lunch went into overtime as tutors enjoyed the support of each other. This was the first Brown Bag Lunch of the year with more to come. --June Gutbier

Reach your Goal in Reading

The eleventh annual Reach Your Goal in Reading Fundraiser Hockey Match took place on February 14. Tutors, students, and the general public enjoyed a fast-paced contest between the **Vermont Law Enforcement Hockey Club (The Enforcers)** and the **Green Mountain Boys Hockey Club**.



Damien Burdick, Fisher Elementary School Program student, poses with Steve Kramer of the Green Mountain Boys Hockey Club

The weather cooperated for the first time in many years which provided safe passage for fans. We wish to thank this year's sponsors: ICE ANGEL, Bill Drunic/The Perfect Wife Restaurant & Tavern; PROGRAM SPONSORS, Express Copy, Vermont News Guide, Stewart's Shops, Vermont Law Enforcement Hockey Club, State Farm Insurance Companies, Green Mountain Boys; STUDENT SPONSORS, Al Ducci's Italian Pantry, Bistro Henry, The Aspen at Manchester, Sonny's Blue Benn Diner, The Bank of Bennington; FRIENDS OF LITERACY, Dorset Union Store, Manchester Pizza House, Kilburn's Convenience Store, The Perfect Wife Restaurant; BOOK SWAP PARTNERS, Finn & Stone, Inc., r.k. Miles, Inc., GSK Climate Control, Briggs-Fowler Insurance Agency; DONORS, Laney's Restaurant, Candeleros, Mulligan's of Manchester, Ye Olde Tavern, and East Dorset Jiffy Mart.

Vermont Country Store Gifts Books to VRP

The Vermont Country Store recently gave Vermont Reading Partners over 150 new books for their School Program Children's Library and Book Bag Programs. The titles include many classics as well as picture books and activity books. These resources will be used by students from PreK through sixth grade. We wish to extend our thanks to the Vermont Country Store for this unexpected and generous donation.

Thank you to the Community at Large for Book Donations

Each day book donations for children are found on the doorstep of Vermont Reading Partners. VRP wishes to gratefully acknowledge these silent donors. After the books are sorted and plated with information about VRP, they are distributed to any one of eleven Book Swap locations where children can access them free of charge. Locations include **Mach's Market**, Pawlet; **Nichols Store**, Danby; **Stewart's Shops**, Manchester; the **Helping Hand**, Arlington; the **Wayside Country Store**, West Arlington; **Shaftsbury Country Store**; **BROC** and **WIC** in Bennington; **Sunrise Family Resource Center**, Bennington; **Oak Hill Child Center** and **Winchester's** store, Pownal. See VRP contact information on the home page of this web site if you're interested in helping with any of these programs.

