

Big Picture South Burlington

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Service Work After Irene

When Vermont was devastated by hurricane Irene, Big Picture students were called upon for assistance. Students quickly agreed to devote their third day of the school year to helping those in need. We traveled to Waterbury and Moretown to assist families whose lives had been turned upside down. Students hauled mud from basements, moved furniture off of warped floors, cleaned rubble from river banks and trees that had been submerged under water only a few days earlier. We found family photos, hats, toys, dishes... all things that had belonged to people whose belongings had been lost to the raging waters of Irene. It was hard work, but it was important. The families we helped were extremely



grateful. It was a meaningful day of service which allowed students to show support for their sister communities in a time of great need.

A Note From Program

Coordinator Jason Cushner

It has been a whirlwind of a semester at Big Picture South Burlington. We started by cancelling some of our Orientation Term curricula to get our hands dirty cleaning up the mess left by Hurricane Irene. This exemplifies the incredible work done by our students and staff this Semester.

Our classroom is not just in a book or on a chalkboard; we go outside, getting our hands dirty dealing with complex issues in the real world. We got soaking wet on our Orientation Term camping trip as we began building the foundation for a strong community. Students have also jumped into internships all over the region, taking on challenges in fields that interest them. We had a student who was tentative about being near goats during an orientation trip to the farm, but then ended up becoming an intern at New Village Farm. Another student had an internship at Downtown Threads where her graphic design work has earned her recognition in the community. And we had a student working with a UVM professor on a mapping project for the City of South Burlington. Every student has gotten their hands "dirty" digging into real life work. It has been inspiring for me to see what the students have accomplished when their interests are not just a nice addition to a predetermined curriculum, but the seed in which most of their learning has grown.

Orientation Term

The goals for Orientation Term were drafted and approved by the Big Picture staff and included the following:

- * To lay the foundation for a student culture of safety and respect- Activities that promoted this goal were the Orientation Trip to Underhill State Park, and Service Learning trips to help victims of tropical storm Irene in Moretown, Waterbury, and Rochester
- * For students to have an experience of high quality project depth- Activities that promoted this goal were geared around group learning plans to design and decorate our new classroom, how to create and foster an ideal community climate for learning, and how to position our school for future growth.
- * For students to be set up for high quality LTI experiences- Students created and/or updated their resumes and cover letters. We worked with students to establish interest based interviews and shadow days. Three group internships were offered: New Village Farms, Crow's Path, and Documentary Film Making.
- * For students to gain self-awareness, particularly in terms of how it relates to their success in BPSB- Students spent time learning more about how the brain processes information. They also took a series of self assessments to identify their specific learning profiles and preferences. In addition, the staff was trained in co-active coaching (a technique that promotes meta-cognition and problem solving). The students were each assigned a 30 minute slot once a week for one-to-one coaching sessions.

These goals were based on the following Essential Questions:

- * How do I define and achieve success for myself?
- * What do we want BPSB to be and how do we get there?



Meet the New Staff at BP

Meet the New Staff at BP

Jason Cushner: Program Coordinator
Jason Cushner has been in Education for over 15 years. He has worked with innovative Schools in Colorado, Rhode Island, and Vermont. He has been awarded the Presidential Award for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching. He loves rock climbing, trail running, and going on adventures with his family.



Christine Lundie: Advisor

Christine has been a member of the South Burlington High School staff for six years. She holds a secondary education/English license from her undergraduate work at Trinity College of Vermont. She received a Masters of Education in Special Education from UVM in 2004. Besides teaching, she spent many years working at social service agencies in the greater Burlington area.



Hannah Valian: Americorps VISTA

Hannah came to BP after graduating from the University of Colorado at Denver in the Spring of 2011. Her major was English Film Studies. She was attracted to the VISTA position at BP because she was part of a similar High School experience at an expeditionary learning school in Denver, CO. Hannah also plays ice hockey and loves all things outdoors.



Fall Learning Through Internship (LTI) Student Experiences

Emina Kelestura

I spent my fall term interning at Downtown Threads, which is a vintage clothing store located on Church Street. I got to design and actually make vinyl stickers. I also designed a Halloween newspaper advertisement which was my mentor James favorite piece of work I did for him. During my time with Downtown Threads, I created excellent pieces of work which have been added to my graphic design portfolio.



Christian DuBrul

During Fall Term, I got an internship at The Departments of Corrections: Probation and Parole in Burlington Vermont. I shadowed probation officers Jonathan Teske and Herbert Sinkinson. I learned all about the Vermont Corrections system and the court system. Throughout my internship, I learned a number of valuable skills that will definitely help me in my future endeavors.



Documentary Group LTI

This term five students participated in a Documentary making LTI experience. Eric Wisowaty, John Dubie, Sandra Burt, Cooper Brown, and Chichi Zhou worked with Jim Shields and Hannah Valian to make a documentary about Big Picture schools in the New England area. This team took trips to Rochester, VT, Lafayette, NY, Providence and Newport, RI. One or two students were profiled at each school. The students in this LTI operated camera equipment, conducted interviews, and edited footage as part of their experience. The project is far from finished, but John and Sandra will devote part of their spring term to post production of the film. They hope to edit a short version of the film to be submitted in the CinaYouth film festival in Chicago. If their film is selected it will be screened as part of the Chicago International Film Festival next October.



Crow's Path was another group LTI offered this term. Dakota Senna, Hunter Pawlaczyk, Sara Meyer, and Moses Laporte worked with mentor Teague to learn about outdoor survival skills. They learned how and where to build shelters, knife safety, how/where to find food, and many other skills. Big Picture students also assisted kids age 8-13 as they learned ways to connect with nature. They made fire by friction kits for kids to attempt fire building. They also built lean-to shelters out of leaves and sticks. Pictured right is a long house they built. On the left, Moses and Sarah gather supplies for the long house.



Student Work: **"This I Believe" by Brittany Manos**

Students were asked to write a "This I Believe" statement about something they believe in. This project was inspired by NPR's series of the same title. NPR asked Americans from all walks of life to share the personal philosophies and core values that guide their daily lives. Brittany is a sophomore in her first year at Big Picture. She is also the Vice President of the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) at South Burlington High School.

I believe in accepting all people. I have heard and seen people judge and discriminate before they try to understand a person.

I am in the Gay-Straight Alliance in my school. I believe that no one should be outed for their sexual orientation. In the GSA we talk about how people are getting labeled and bullied for being gay etc. Some have even died because they are ashamed of who they are. A big story that has made people understand that bullying is a big issue is the Tyler Clementi story. This story was all over the news; Tyler Clementi's friends thought it would be fun to put a video camera in his closet, knowing he was gay. He was in his dorm room with his boyfriend, not knowing the video camera was in the closet and not knowing it was Upstreaming straight to the Internet. Tyler Clementi's friends thought it would be funny to humiliate him. The bullying got to be too much and Tyler Clementi killed himself by jumping off the George Washington Bridge into the Hudson River. Moments before he posted on Facebook 'jumping off the GW bridge now,'...no one believed him. This story highlights what some kids have gone through or are going through. People are now opening their arms for support.

There are many other reports of teens committing suicide because of bullying for being different. I came across a story while researching for an Art project; There was a cartoon saying GSA clubs are brain washing teens. I clicked on the article attached to the picture, and it read 'Principle banned Gay support Groups from his school' Which to me, is wrong, not just because they are banning gay support groups but because students have the right to support what ever they want. The principal obviously has a personal bias and his students shouldn't have to suffer for it. Is he going to ban gays from his school? They shouldn't feel ashamed to be who they are with their principal, a person they should be able to trust.

I feel anyone can love who they want no matter what the gender. What if you were looked down on because you where straight? What if it was weird? What if no one understood and didn't try to? How would you feel? I would feel miserable and alone. No one deserves to feel that way about love. Love is a happy thing, a thing that people look forward to and try to find. When the lucky ones find it, they shouldn't be ashamed for it. I have so much respect for the gay couples who have been through bullying in their lives and yet their love still lives on, even when they didn't have a supportive atmosphere anywhere. I believe that everyone should have that atmosphere. I believe I will give it to them.

What's Next at BP?

Service Learning Term

Students will be participating in a one month Service Learning Term which begins January 2nd. This term will focus on the importance of service in communities of need. They will learn about career opportunities in the service field as well as become familiar with local resources. They will also experience the growth and fulfillment that community service inspires. This year some of our students will be participating in a trip to the Boston area while others head abroad to Nicaragua. Both groups leave January 13th. The Boston crew will return on the 20th while the Nicaragua group returns the 23rd.

Service In Boston

Our service in Boston will kick off on Martin Luther King Day, a nationally recognized day of service. Students will be in Cambridge making scarves, blankets, bookmarks, Valentine's day cards for seniors and service men/women, and making emergency room activity kits for kids. Tuesday we will begin our service at the Franklin Park Zoo. This project will include landscaping, painting, and making toys and other enrichment items. There will of course be time to explore the Zoo as well. Tuesday night students will attend a film called *Daisy Bates: First Lady of Little Rock*. This film tells the story of her life and public support of black students who registered to attend an all-white high school in Arkansas.



Service In Nicaragua

Advisor Jim Shields will travel with 7 Big Picture students to San Ramon, Nicaragua for a week of "coffee camp." January is the busiest coffee harvest month in Nicaragua, and often the main source of income for the communities in the coffee-growing region. By running a "coffee camp," a day camp for elementary aged school children, more parents can engage in the coffee harvest, which maximizes their income and improves their lives throughout the year. The BPSB students will stay with families for an authentic introduction to life in Nicaragua, and during the day, they will lead the children in games, crafts and educational activities while their parents provide for the well being of their families. Please let us know if you would like to find a way to support the trip.



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