



Empowering Youth  
Strengthening Families  
Building Community

# LARAWAY

## YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES



December 2011

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### Board Members

**Duncan Tingle, President**  
**Meg Harris, Vice President**  
**Carrie Lambert, Treasurer**  
**David Bergh, Secretary**  
**Paul Dupre**  
**Justin Philie**

**Greg Stefanski,**  
*Executive Director*

## A Season of Gratitude

As the holidays approach and another year winds down, Laraway has many things to be thankful for. Just over a year ago, we kicked off construction on our barn renovation. To celebrate the significance of this transition, students, youth and staff from our programs planted over 40 fruit and nut trees.

On September 15, several hundred students, staff, families, friends and community partners joined us in celebrating the Grand Opening of our new facility. Guests received a first-hand view of how our classrooms are used to prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. Attendees experienced the beauty of our property while

learning about the many ways we are incorporating agriculture and recreation into our education and therapeutic activities. Smiles on the faces in the photo above offer a sense of the spirit of the day.

Many individuals and groups have worked hard to fund efforts to create Laraway's new home. We have \$35,000 to raise to meet our \$900,000 Capital Campaign goal.

We appreciate your support. We invite your participation.

Best wishes for warm and wonderful holidays from all of us at Laraway!

**Greg Stefanski, Executive Director**  
**(802) 635-2805 x 102**  
**GregS@Laraway.org**

## Laraway serves 1,000th meal at Community Lunch

Laraway students and staff actively participate in the **Johnson Community Lunch Program**. The volunteer initiative recently passed a significant milestone by serving its 1000<sup>th</sup> meal.

The twice monthly community gathering which offers free lunches at the **United Church of Johnson** represents a unique collaboration between **Laraway, Johnson State College, ARAMARK Food Service, Woodward Design Studio** and varied community partners. The

combination of food, fellowship, volunteerism and job skills development serves up a win-win situation.

Laraway staff and youth assist with planning, prep, serving and clean-up. It's a great way to get out and meet our neighbors in Johnson. Mark your calendar for **December 14th, 11:30-12:30**. Your table awaits!



**Laraway attends Women Can Do Conference\* at Vermont Technical College**

October 13, 2011

From workshops on animal husbandry to how to weld, the event exposed high school girls to career options in trade and technical fields.

“The conference helped girls realize that people are interested in helping young women explore and pursue non-traditional careers.”  
Aleda Boomhower, Laraway Behavioral Interventionist

\*For more information: vtworksforwomen.org

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We thank outgoing Board member **Stuart Senghas** for his thoughtful service as we welcome him aboard as a Laraway Case Manager

**Alumni Brunch: Learning Lessons from the past**

Laraway hosted its annual “First Saturday in November” Alumni Brunch on Saturday, November 5th. Former staff and students gathered to share stories and reminisce about their time at Laraway. Memories of canoe trips and hiking adventures were rounded out by recognizing the valuable learning—social and academic—that took place. Alumni pointed out the importance of the campus jobs assigned to youth, jobs that enhanced confidence and promoted a sense of ownership.

We watched a clip from *Ask Us Who We Are*, a new documentary film by Vermont filmmaker **Bess O’Brien**. The film focuses on the experiences of youth in foster care. A few of the individuals featured in the film have ties to Laraway. Through interviews with youth, foster parents and biological parents, O’Brien crafts a powerful narrative which illuminates the realities of Vermont’s foster care system and highlights challenges many of our young people in Vermont are facing.

We are actively seeking to connect with former students and staff as part of a **Laraway History Project**. Please contact **Katherine Stamper** at [KatherineS@Laraway.org](mailto:KatherineS@Laraway.org) or 635-2805 x 106.



**Individuals**

- Keller Ashby
- Karry Bennett
- Richard & Emily Bland
- Sunny Brink
- Jack Dennis
- Maryann Gates
- Luke Hopkins
- Lori & Paul Ledak
- Randall Mulligan
- Floyd & Cindy Nease
- Jessyca Nelle
- Judyth Pendell & Warren Azano
- Morgain Raleigh
- Stuart Senghas
- Jackie Sforza
- Dr. Terry Starkey
- Phil Wells
- Arlene Wheeler

**Businesses / Organizations**

- Great Big Graphics
- EverBank
- The Farm Between
- Green Mountain Aeries 3210, Fraternal Order of Eagles
- J. & L. Hardware
- Price Chopper
- Robert’s Landscape Supply
- St. John’s-in-the-Mountains Episcopal Church
- G.W. Tatro Construction Company
- VT Studio Center

*If your name was inadvertently omitted, please contact Katherine Stamper at (802) 635-2805 x 106*



## Island Adventure

### Guiding fluffy, flossy and sometimes stubborn sheep while learning about life on Lake Champlain

Several Laraway youth and teachers travelled tumultuous waters to reach a little piece of nirvana on Lake Champlain: **Savage Island**. Nestled off the east coast of Grand Isle, the private enclave offers 207 acres of sand beaches, pastures and woods. There are more sheep---far more---than people populating this green patch floating in blue waters.

Purchased for \$5500 in 1952 by the late Vermont state **Senator Ted Riehle**, the island has remained nearly pristine, with a mere three dwellings and a solar powered barn. **Dunlap Riehle**, grandson of Ted, served as host as a crew of Laraway kids and staff put on their sea legs for the day. The former Peace Corps volunteer and alternative energy enthusiast was happy to share his island paradise.

Riehle piloted his small boat for the twenty minute crossing in choppy waters. Staff and students were struck by the simple beauty of the place, open land dotted with apple trees and untouched forest. They walked to the sheep farm and met **Tim**, the caretaker, who lives on Savage Island year round. Tim is big and strong, built for the hard work farming requires. His soft-spoken nature resonated with the youth.

Tim's extensive experience in animal husbandry provided a wealth of knowledge---

practical and anecdotal---to both staff and students. His island existence is broken up with trips to the mainland. He joked that his small pooch---possessing the delicate name Paris Hilton---is his "herding dog."

**Kate\***, a Laraway student said, "We spent time on the farm getting to know the sheep and helping weigh them." They also guided the fluffy, flossy and sometimes stubborn animals to a designated pasture as part of a routine deworming regimen.

After completing their chores, Laraway kids and staff took a walk with Dunlap to pick apples before settling in for a lakeside picnic. Walking along the island's gently sloping hills, **Mark\***, a Laraway student said, "I can't believe I'm on an island. I can't even see the lake!"

Hands-on learning is a centerpiece of Laraway's educational mission. Sometimes that learning takes place in pristine spots amid warm and fuzzy sheep on an island paradise. Thank you, Dunlap and Tim, for sharing a very special place with our students.

"It was a once in a life opportunity to see an amazing island property," said Laraway teacher **Patrick Marrin**.

\*Youth names changed to protect confidentiality



## MISSION

Providing opportunities for children and families to recognize their individual strengths while supporting them to grow and contribute within our communities

### Staff Profile: Sarah Squirrell

Sarah Squirrell, Director of Laraway's Backpack Program, has worn many hats in her career including running a gourmet coffee company and supervising a residential program for girls.

Sarah qualified for and ran the Boston Marathon. She enjoys gardening, hiking, reading and writing. She is also the parent of two

incredible kids.

"What I enjoy most about this work is being an ally to children, youth and families in our community and working side by side with such a dedicated group of people."

Thanks, Sarah!



Laraway is currently recruiting new Board members!

If you are interested, please contact Greg Stefanski, Executive Director, at (802) 635-2805 x102 or [GregS@Laraway.org](mailto:GregS@Laraway.org)



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Laraway is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to identifying and building on the strengths of children and youth with emotional, behavioral and mental health challenges, through alternative education, therapeutic foster care and public school based behavioral intervention supports.