

LARAWAY YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES

LARAWAY STRONG KIDS STRONG FAMILIES STRONG COMMUNITY



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Executive Director's Letter
- Stitched with Love
- Successful Alumni Event
- Thank You's
- Alumni Profile
- Polar Plunge on Jan. 29th

Board Members

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

Greg Stefanski, *Executive Director*

December 2010

Children thrive in a nurturing environment

Holiday Greetings from Laraway

Reflecting on the upcoming holidays, we have much to be thankful for as we continue our work with kids and families.

Barn Construction Kick-off

Over 200 staff, kids and community friends gathered for our November 11th **Groundbreaking**. The barn, currently suspended 5 feet in the air, will serve as our new school and administrative offices. With shovels in the ground, we aim for a summer 2011 Grand Opening.

2:1 Challenge Grant

A generous anonymous donor issued a challenge grant to help us close our Capital Campaign. For every dollar we raise between December 1, 2010 and June 30, 2011, we will receive an additional two dollars, up to \$50,000. A \$50 gift becomes \$150, a \$100 gift becomes \$300, and a \$1,000 gift becomes \$3,000. I invite

you to help us conclude our campaign.

Polar Plunge Fundraiser

Who wants to jump in a lake with us on **January 29, 2011**? **Morrisville Rotary Club** selected Laraway as beneficiary of its annual **Polar Plunge at Lake Elmore**. If winter swimming in Vermont is not your cup of tea, we would be happy to have you sponsor a team and support this great cause.

May the holiday season provide you with time for reflection and thanksgiving for the gifts of this past year.

Greg Stefanski, Executive Director
(802) 635-2805 x 201
GregS@Laraway.org

Blankets Stitched with Love

Two Laraway teens, **Bridgette** and **Mikayla**, took it upon themselves to create warm, comforting blankets for homeless cats living in Lamoille County shelters.

Working with their foster mother, **Candy Griswold**, the young women created over 170 colorful, plush blankets with fabric donated by **Vermont Fleece Co.**

"We know what it's like to have nothing, to have nowhere to go," Mikayla

said. "Helping animals helps us."

Twenty spools of thread and numerous bolts of fabric later, the blankets stand neatly folded, awaiting delivery to the **North Country Animal League, Lamoille Valley Veterinary Services, Animal Medical Hospital of Vermont, and Stowe Veterinary Services.**

Winter will be a bit warmer due to the generosity of these young women.



Laraway Alumni Brunch a Huge Success

Laraway hosted its **2nd Annual Alumni Brunch** on Saturday, November 6th.

Formers students and staff, including some who travelled from out of state, were hosted by current staff and board members.

Participants took time to catch up with each other over bagels and coffee, muffins and scones.

A special feature of the event was a **Story Sharing Circle** facilitated by **Recille Hamrell**. She deftly guided the group of about 30 through a series of prompts designed to conjure memories, both funny and poignant.

One alum said, "I was able to connect with

friends I hadn't seen in years. Thank you!"



Youth Voices

Campers

Campers come and go
Some grow weak,
All grow old
But my favorites are
not big and fancy,
They are instead,
lived in by Nancy
They make me feel
Oh so real
Oh, but how I feel
Is not a big deal

By "Skamper"



Community Thank You's

Individuals

Anonymous
David Bergh
Lisa Burt-Parkhurst
Catherine Broderick
Joann Burns
Paul & Mary Dupre
Stub Earle
Ben & Judith Joseph
Carrie Lambert
Dan Pratt
Casey & Howard Romero
Mark Woodward

Organizations

Ben & Jerry's Foundation
Burton Snowboards
Butternut Mountain Farm
Eastern Star, Stowe
Foote Brook Farm
Green Mt. Landscaping
Jefferson Quarry
Joseph Architects, LLC
Morrisville Rotary Club
Paine's Christmas Tree Farm
Price Chopper-Morrisville
Rock Art Brewery
VT Dept. of Buildings & General Services
Vermont Fleece Company
Windham Foundation

Wish List Item



Do you have a used guitar hiding in a closet, waiting to be picked up and played? If you choose to donate it to Laraway, you'll make a youth happy *and* bring more music into our school.

If you can help, please contact Katherine at (802) 635-2805 x 205.

Thanks!

We appreciate our supporters. If, for some reason, your name was omitted, please contact Katherine Stamper at (802) 635-2805 x 205 KatherineS@Laraway.org

From Laraway to Ben & Jerry's

“If it wasn't for Laraway, I don't know where I'd be.”

Rick, Laraway Alumnus

Rick, the oldest of four children, grew up in Burlington's North End. His parents divorced when he was six; his mother left. The children were sent to live at St. Joseph's Orphanage, run by the

Catholic Sisters of Providence on North Avenue in Burlington.

“I remember potatoes. I was hooked on potatoes and butter,” Rick remembers. “We lived in these large dormitories, rooms with 30 or 40 beds.”

Rick recalls being separated from his younger siblings and the strictness of the nuns. Spanking was common. One nun---Rick can't remember her name---stands out in his memory as having shown him particular kindness in an otherwise harsh environment. Kids attended the orphanage school, further separating them from neighborhood children.

“We saw our dad every other weekend. It was hard,” Rick recalls.

Rick's father remarried when Rick was 10 years old. He waited until the school year ended to bring his children home to live with his new wife. Rick's father was a strict disciplinarian.

Rick attended Flynn School and Hunt Middle School. He was a Boy Scout. There were problems at home---fights and disagreements with his father.

“It was 1973 and my dad made me have a crew cut. Imagine how I felt when all the other kids were growing their hair long,” Rick smiles, longish hair protruding from his baseball cap.

“My first quarter report card at Burlington High School had 3 Fs and 3 Ds. I didn't bring it home because I'd get in trouble,” Rick remembers. Arguments with his father frequently resulted in

beatings.

Rick's grades didn't match his intellectual capabilities. His guidance counselor connected him with the Burlington High School psychologist. Rick found a sympathetic ear and told his story. The psychologist was instrumental in getting Rick into the Westford Group Home. He transferred to Essex High School where he faired better academically and socially, but then the home closed.

Rick experienced a series of foster homes, including one in Winooski where he lived for about one year while attending Winooski High School.

Rick was troubled then. He'd skip school and hang out in Burlington. He ran away from the foster home and called his social worker. “I told her I wanted to go to Laraway,” Rick says.

“I think I just grew up at Laraway. I realized there was more to the world than what I perceived,” Rich reflects.

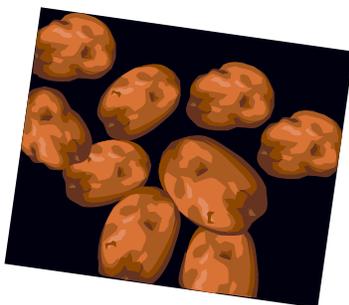
Rick earned his GED and a High School Diploma at Laraway. He won a Turrell Scholarship, attending Champlain College for one year.

Rick has been employed in the Planning & Maintenance Dept. at Ben & Jerry's since 2001. He started out making ice cream and was promoted.

“It's a great job for me. It's always different,” Rick says. “I also like the people I work with.”

Rick, who is happily married, enjoys raising his young son, an avid play hockey. Rick clearly loves being a dad.

What does he want for his son? To attend and graduate from college...“to do a little better than I did.”



Thank you for supporting
Laraway's work in the
community

**LARAWAY YOUTH &
FAMILY SERVICES**

P.O. Box 621
Johnson, VT 05656
Phone: 802-635-2805
Fax: 802-635-7273
E-mail: admin@laraway.org



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 and therapeutic foster care.

MISSION

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

Polar Plunge to support Laraway on Saturday, January 29th!

Does taking a dip in Lake Elmore while raising money for a great cause appeal to you?

The **Morrisville Rotary Club** selected **Laraway** as the beneficiary of its **2011 Polar Plunge**.

There's a **Pre-Plunge Party** at **River Arts** on the evening of Friday, January

28th with a Saturday, 11 am plunge into the crisp, clean, icy waters of Lake Elmore!

We invite you to take the plunge, sponsor a plunger, and come out for a spine-chilling, fun time!

For more information, contact Katherine Stamper at (802) 635-2805 x 205 or KatherineS@Laraway.org



Laraway goes GREEN!

Prefer to receive this newsletter via email? Email KatherineS@laraway.org, type **GO GREEN** in the subject line, and we'll take care of it. Thanks!