

LARAWAY YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES

LARAWAY...

IT'S ABOUT THE KIDS



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Board Members

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Meg Harris

Greg Stefanski, *Executive Director*

Spring 2009

Children thrive in a nurturing environment

It's Time to Plant Our Roots!!

It is with great joy and excitement that I announce Laraway is taking steps to make our dream of a new facility a reality. On Friday, March 20, Laraway entered into a contract with Marian and Sidney Nichols to purchase the house, barn and 39 acres they own here in Johnson.

For years we've grappled with the limitations of our existing facilities. In researching various options, it's evident that moving to a new site is the best way to meet growing demand for our services.

We've consulted financial, architectural, engineering and development experts to assess our readiness for a major capital campaign. Well, it's time to let the horses out of the gate!

Over the next few weeks, our contractors will begin the design and engineering work to usher us through the Act 250 process. At the same time we will

make sure we have met all requirements to secure the necessary funds in our diverse financial package. If all goes according to plan, we will begin construction this summer with a move-in date of January 2010.

A huge thank you goes out to all the kids, staff and Board members who have invested time and energy to get us to this doorstep of a new day for Laraway. I would also like to thank our contractors, community partners, and YOU who are helping us turn this vision to enhance services for kids into reality.

If you would like to know more about the project or learn how you can help, please call (802-635-2805 x 201) or send an e-mail (GregS@Laraway.org). See you at the farm!

Greg Stefanski, *Executive Director*

Moment in Time: The Power of Perseverance

Hiking three miles deep into woods at Beaver Meadows was a new experience for Ethan*. At 11-years-old, he was the youngest hiker to strap on snowshoes and a backpack for a night of winter camping.

"I said I'm gonna do this no matter what," Ethan recalled.



With support and encouragement from staff and older

students, Ethan completed the hike, overcoming cold and fatigue. He helped set up camp and build a *quincie*—a snow shelter for sleeping.

The adventurous day concluded with dinner of macaroni and cheese and steaming cups of cocoa before everyone settled down to sleep in preparation for the next day's long hike back to civilization!

Laraway's Backpack Program: Student Profile

Kevin*, a student in Laraway's Backpack Program, wants to be a police officer. "I want to help people, to make my town safe," Kevin says.

As a student at a local public high school, Kevin enjoys reading books by Vermont author Joe Citro and following NASCAR. He enjoys his classes in psychology and English. He tutors a younger neighbor in math and works part-time as a dishwasher at a local ski area.

"I like the people at work," Kevin notes, "plus I get all the free soda I want."

Laraway's Backpack Program is committed to the goal of inclusion for children and youth in their public schools and community. The program is strengths-based and utilizes a model of positive behavior support.

Kevin faced learning and behavioral challenges when first referred to the Backpack Program. Slowly, with support and guidance from Backpack staff, he's been able to ease his integration into school.

"He has friends at school," says Kevin's mom. "He's improved in his schoolwork and gets along better with his father and me. He loves his job too!"

Laraway responds to the needs of at-risk kids and their families by offering innovative strength-based services thru alternative education, therapeutic foster care, and public school based support programs

Community Thank You's

Mill Foundation

The Manor

Butternut Hill Farm

Stowe Insurance

David Garbutt, O.D.

MSI

FireProTec

Michaud's Septic

H.A. Manosh

Wild Brook Organics

Ober Hill Tree Farm

Laughing Moon

Chocolates

Johnson Hardware and

Rental

JSC

Bear Pond Books

Pie in the Sky

Notch Above Emporium

Stowe Video

Shaw's Gen. Store

CREW, Inc.

Stowe Mt. Lodge

Power Play Sports

Hoagies Restaurant

Costco

House of Pizza

Turtle Fur

Vermont Originals

Wheel House Design

DJ's Corner Store

Waterbury Family

Dentistry

Thompson's Flour Shop

Once Upon A Time Toys

Organizational Support

Services

Lamoille County Sheriff's

Department



Chittenden Bank Supports Laraway

Chittenden Bank has been a longstanding partner supporting Laraway's efforts to serve at-risk children and youth in Vermont. Chittenden Bank recently donated \$1000 to support Laraway's work.

Pictured at right are Greg Stefanski, Laraway's Executive Director and Gayle McKinnon-Alexander, Chittenden Bank's Community Services Officer.

Thank you Chittenden!



Finding Confidence on Vermont's Slopes

Skiing is what winter is about for many Vermont children. Piling on layers, gliding down glistening slopes, and refueling with hot chocolate creates memories to last a lifetime. Challenging oneself in the physical realm helps build the self-confidence youth need to make positive, productive choices. Thanks to the generosity of local ski areas---Smugglers' Notch Resort and Stowe Mountain Resort---several kids from Laraway Youth and Family Services had first time experiences skiing and snowboarding on some of Vermont's most spectacular trails. Both resorts donated lift tickets allowing kids and their mentors to spend a day cruising fresh powder.

"It was our pleasure to support the students of Laraway in their outings at Smugglers'. Skiing and snowboarding are a great way to bring people together, enjoying the mountains and snow," reflected Karen Boushie, Assistant Director for Public Relations at Smugglers'. "Getting a first taste of these winter sports with your friends or a special companion is often the first step to many years of enjoying the sports. We're always happy to be part of

"Helping children is the single largest component of our philanthropy program," said Kim Leslie, Special Events Coordinator at Stowe Mountain Resort. "It's most special when they actually get to experience our snowsports."



the process."

component of our philanthropy program," said Kim Stowe Mountain Resort. "It's most special when they mountains and benefit from the enjoyment of

Alex*, a young teen with a shy smile and enthusiasm for adventure, was able to learn to snowboard thanks to the donated lift tickets.

"Snowboarding is fun. It's exciting. You're going fast on the mountain, catching air," he reflected. "It's pretty much the main thing I like to do. It's one of my favorite things."

Derek Liebhardt, a Laraway mentor and experienced skier who accompanied Alex on the slopes at Smugglers' Notch and Stowe offered, "Skiing, to me, is like surfing down a mountain. It's like floating...you're staying on top of the snow and just cruising."

Alex's first trip down the mountain on a rented snowboard was not easy. "I kind of fell---a lot," he remembered. It was very cold and the snow was a little crusty at first but he kept going, picking himself up each time he fell. Alex tapped into his determination, bolstered by the gentle guidance of his mentor. Trips together to the slopes allowed Alex to gain confidence and skill with a snowboard. He falls far less these days.

Alex has grown through the experience of learning to snowboard---physically, socially, and emotionally. His legs are stronger from flexing muscles to maintain balance and negotiate turns. He's learned the courtesies expected of skiers and snowboarders who must share narrow swaths of snowy path down the side of a mountain. Most importantly, he's learned perseverance and the power of not giving up, even if something is hard.

When Alex was asked what he might say to the owners of Smugglers' Notch Resort and Stowe Mountain Resort, Alex responded: "I'd want to say thank you. I had an awesome experience and...you have a nice mountain."

*Names changed to protect confidentiality



MISSION

Empowering children, youth and families to develop awareness of their abilities and assets to live safe, fulfilling lives.

Board Member Profile: Justin Philie

Justin Philie is a seasoned mental health professional with 10 years of experience in the field. As a newer addition to Laraway's Board, Justin played a key role in assessing facility needs in light of growing demand for our services.

He's worked with kids as a teacher, mentor, employment counselor, advocate and case manager in residential and

community-based programs.

Justin is married with 2 kids.

Reflecting on why he makes time to volunteer for Laraway, Justin offers the following: "I value serving on Laraway's Board because of my direct experience working with kids. I know how important getting an education is to them. Laraway, with its wide-ranging services, makes this happen for kids."

**Thank You
for supporting
Laraway's work in the
community!**

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!

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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 and therapeutic foster care.

