

LARAWAY YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES

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Meg Harris

Greg Stefanski, Executive Director



LARAWAY...

IT'S ABOUT THE KIDS



Fall 2009

Children thrive in a nurturing environment

Community Building

August 13, 2009 represents a very important day in Laraway's history. With full board support and significant community backing, Laraway purchased Johnson's historic Hopkins Farm—a farmhouse, barn, and 39 agricultural acres bordering the Lamoille River.

Transitions to our new home are in full swing. Staff from our foster care and public-school-based intervention services moved into the lovely farmhouse. Kids and staff exchanged cramped quarters for therapeutic spaces overlooking fields and mountains.

Renovations are slated to occur in two phases. Phase 1 involves converting the garage to office space for the house.

We hope to kick off Phase 2 in spring, transforming the long-dormant dairy barn into our school while preserving the architectural integrity of the 1940s

structure. We've worked with historical preservation officials, crafting designs to satisfy Act 250 requirements.

Our successful Open House in September served as a testament to interest in our project. Laraway needs to raise \$1 million to renovate the barn and move in for the 2010–11 school year. Thanks to the generosity of several major donors, we're on track to realize our goal.

We invite you to consider how you might help us achieve this goal. No gift is too small. Please help us create a home from which Laraway's kids can learn to build community. Please feel free to contact me directly.

Greg Stefanski, Executive Director
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Laraway wins Marianne Metropoulos Humanitarian Award

For the last 3 summers, **Lisa Rock**, Laraway's cook, prepared extra lunches for kids at risk of food insecurity. Partnering with the **Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger**, Laraway served as summer host site for Lamoille County.

In presenting the **Marianne Metropoulos Award**, **Marissa Parisi**, Executive Director of VTCECH said: "Summer food programs provide important nutrition to low-income

children. Laraway committed needed resources and capacity, becoming a model program in Vermont."

Congratulations Lisa! Thank you also to our kids and staff who volunteer at community food shelves and glean excess produce from farmers' fields. Working together, we can realize great strides in confronting hunger in Vermont.

Open House a Resounding Success

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

About 400 people, including educators, members of the business community, legislators, partner agencies, community friends and neighbors, turned out on a beautiful September evening to visit our new home at the Hopkins' Farm on Route 15 in Johnson.

Plans for renovations were also on display.

Staff and Laraway families mingled with guests, sampling a tasty spread prepared by our staff while listening to live Bluegrass performed by the **Old Dirty String Band**.

Guests learned about our programs and toured a **Student Art Show** amid impromptu games of hacky sack and kickball.

Representatives from **Senator Leahy** and **Congressman Welch's** offices were also on hand.

It was a great way to introduce our new home and highlight its potential!



Community Thank You's

Casey & Howard Romero
Pall Spera
James & Monica Heath
R. Marion Taylor
Duncan & Nancy Tingle
David Bergh
Julia & Dennis Landry
George & Janis Lovell
Justin & Lauren Philie
David & Lucy Marvin
Anthony Stamper
David Day
Keller & Chris Ashby

Keith & Tonya Tourville
Meg Harris

Green Mountain Coffee
Lovin' Cup Cafe



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

Laraway Wins Grants

Thanks to a generous grant from the **Green Mt. Fund** of the **Vermont Community Foundation**, Laraway was able to purchase a canoe, bicycles and plan a whale-watching trip for our kids. Experiential opportunities go far in helping kids develop resiliency.

Laraway brought **American Recovery and Reinvestment** dollars back to Vermont by receiving \$8,626 in a grant to purchase a walk-in freezer for our new facility. Increased storage capacity will save Laraway money, enhancing our ability to buy foods in greater bulk.



Dispatch from the Sea

"If you could describe the ocean in one word, what would it be?" Laraway staffer **Jaimi Lambert** asked. Laura* thought for a moment as a grin registered across her face, "Exciting," she said. After 16 years of treading our planet, this Laraway student finally set her eyes upon the churning waters of the Atlantic Ocean. This was Laura's first trip to the sea and she took full advantage, bathing in chilled water, smelling the salty air, and playing on sun-baked sand.

On August 4th, a group of staff and students embarked on a 4-hour ride from Johnson, Vermont to Hampton Beach in New Hampshire. Lambert knew this would be the first time at the ocean for several of the kids and their excitement was palpable. Their caravan wended its way through seemingly endless lines of cars and construction. Staff members were on a mission to get their kids to the beach.

"When we arrived, the entire staff was in awe. It wasn't just the intense heat or the crowd of people moving in and out of cars like a swarm of bees," Lambert observed. "It was the fact that, during all that waiting, not one of the kids uttered a negative word."

The vans weaved through this moving mass of humanity to locate a parking spot before staff and students ran towards the inviting waves, dropping their towels in a heap on the sand. They splashed in the cooling waters, body surfed, and played an impromptu game of wiffle ball—all under the careful supervision of Laraway staff. Music flowed from a boom box as folks played "Old Maid" on the patchwork quilt that served as a beach blanket. Mad dashes to the waves were alternated with

warming up on the sand before running back for yet another refreshing dip.

Later, at the campsite, the group set up for the night. The travelers prepared a feast of hamburgers, hot dogs, veggie burgers, pasta salad, and lemonade. They talked into the evening, topping off dinner with s'mores—roasted marshmallows nestled between crisp graham crackers and melted Hershey chocolate bars. Scanning the group of sun-splashed, tired-but-happy kids, it was clear to Lambert it had been an absolutely perfect day.

Folks rose early the next morning to eat breakfast and break camp. Sunshine and salt air beckoned. They would spend a few more hours playing, learning, and growing by the sea before the long drive back to Vermont.

Laura, when asked to reflect on the trip, offered the following: "That was awesome! I didn't want to leave!"

Jaimi Lambert, a Laraway Behavioral Specialist, contributed to this article

*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

Board Member Profile: Meg Harris

Meg Harris owns Lovin' Cup Café on Main Street in Johnson serving up delicious sandwiches, pastries and a variety of coffee creations.

"My business has proved itself to be a great blessing in my life. Many of my regulars have become friends and I can't see being able to run the coffee shop without their help and support," Harris said.

Meg brings a unique view to her work at Laraway. She was on staff at Laraway for several

years beginning in 2001. During her tenure, Harris worked as a behavioral interventionist, tutor, and as business manager.

"What left the strongest impression on me during my work with Laraway was the beauty of human resilience," she observed. "Witnessing a young person work through and grow from serious trauma is a moving and inspiring experience."

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!

Thank you for supporting
Laraway's work in the
community

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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.

