

# LARAWAY YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES

## LARAWAY...

## IT'S ABOUT THE KIDS



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Winter 2010

*Children thrive in a nurturing environment*

### Celebrating our past while building our future

Welcome to Laraway's newsletter! As I write, the thermometer hovers near 12 degrees while snowflakes swirl outside.

In this newsletter, you'll learn about Laraway students' efforts to raise funds for Haiti and a new alumni initiative. You'll also meet a bright, ambitious teenager from our foster care program.

While focusing on daily operations, it's important to also cast an eye towards the future and ask the question: What will Laraway need to be able to continue its quality education and therapeutic programs? You guessed it....the farm we purchased in August. We are excited about integrating agricultural activities into services provided to kids and families.

Phase 1 construction---adding new offices to the farmhouse is done. Phase 2 ---transforming the barn into our new school, with classrooms, counseling

spaces, an art studio, a cafeteria, conference rooms and staff offices---is waiting to begin.

Our goal is to start Phase 2 in spring. With \$600,000 in cash, equity and donations, we need to raise another \$500,000.

A generous donor issued a challenge: If we raise \$150,000 by March 1<sup>st</sup>, they will provide an even larger gift. We're going public to thank our wonderful donors and invite others to consider a gift to Laraway at this critical time in our history.

Please feel free to contact me. I'd love to talk with you about our project!

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

### Haiti: Students think globally, act locally

Haiti experienced a devastating earthquake on January 12, 2010. The 7.0 magnitude quake near the capital city of Port-au-Prince leveled buildings and killed or injured countless citizens of this, the poorest nation in the western hemisphere.

Laraway School students, eager to raise funds for the recovery effort, launched a community bottle drive in Johnson.

Laraway contacted local press outlets

and distributed bags labeled "Bottle Drive for Haiti" to homes in Johnson Village. Students collected over 2000 cans and bottles, donating the proceeds to support American Red Cross efforts in the devastated region.

"The kids took time to learn about Haiti and were really enthused about helping," observed Laraway Behavioral Interventionist Paula Goes.

## Laraway Hosts Successful Alumni Event

Laraway hosted an informal **Alumni Breakfast** on Saturday, January 23rd. Former students and staff gathered to reminisce, scan old photos, and explore how Laraway might forge deeper, longer-lasting connections with alumni.

Laraway graduates included folks working within Vermont's

medical, social service, building and granite industries. One alum, a 1976 graduate and employee of Ben & Jerry's, treated the group to ice cream.

Continuing efforts will be made to reach out to alumni to foster community while drawing upon folks' ideas to inform the work we do

with children and families.

For more information, please contact:

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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

- Ben & Jerry's Foundation
- Mill Foundation
- VT Community Foundation
- Concept2 Employees
- Lamoille County Sheriff's Dept.
- Cady's Falls Nursery
- Manufacturing Solutions, Inc.
- Michaud's Septic Service
- Charles Grenier, PC
- Dr. David Garbutt
- Smugglers' Notch
- Craftsbury Outdoor Center
- Northern Scapes & Gardens
- R.L. Vallee, Inc.
- Queen of Sprouts
- Shaw's-Williston
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*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*

## “Just because you’re in (foster) care, doesn't mean you can't be successful”

“I want to become a successful entrepreneur,” Brian\* says, “because I don’t want to limit myself to just one thing. I’d like to have enough money to give it away, to help anyone who needs it.”

Boredom seems an unlikely condition for this Laraway youth, an honor student at Lamoille Union High School and recipient of a Congressional Youth Leadership Council Scholarship. The scholarship will allow Brian to attend a national youth conference addressing public policy issues. Brian’s application and well-written essay convinced the organization he deserved a scholarship.

“Before coming to Laraway, I was in a foster home where they weren’t really feeding me,” Brian remembers.

When asked, Brian explains that certain foods in his foster home were off limits. His foster parents ate one thing and fed another to the foster kids, often inexpensive Raman noodles.

Brian was hesitant about coming to Laraway. How could he be sure a new foster placement through Laraway would be positive?

“I didn’t want to go to Laraway. I called everyone. I went to the highest person at DCF (Vermont Department for Children and Families),” Brian recalls.

Meeting Laraway foster parent Mary Ackley made all the difference.

“Mary was amazing,” Brian says. “At our first meeting, Mary asked me what my favorite meal was. The day I moved in, Mary cooked macaroni and cheese for dinner and she baked a carrot cake! That little small detail we talked about at our first meeting—she made it happen.”

“Mary is devoted to us kids. She goes out of her

way for us. We are her priorities,” Brian observes. She’s there when you need her. She talks with you.”

Brian’s introduction to Laraway was not without a few bumps. He was used to far less structure. He was not used to having to follow a schedule and having caring adults around him who set limits.

“More structure is an alright thing,” Brian says. “Since coming to Laraway, I’ve come to understand myself—my strengths and weaknesses. I’ve also learned to say ‘no’ when I need to. Some people used to take advantage of me.”

Laraway caseworker Lisa Burt-Parkhurst and psychologist Matt Sadowsky are part of Brian’s team.

“Matt is awesome. He’s very easy going and understands where you’re coming from,” Brian observes. “Lisa really cares about you. It’s more than a job for her. She helps you figure out what’s best for you.”

While earning straight A’s at Lamoille Union High School, Brian is setting his sights on attending college. He was recently inducted into the National Honor Society.

Brian’s message to readers: “Just because you’re in (foster) care, doesn't mean you can't be successful in life.”

**\*Name changed to protect confidentiality**



Thank you for supporting  
Laraway's work in the  
community

**LARAWAY YOUTH  
& FAMILY  
SERVICES**

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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.

## MISSION

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

### More community Thank You's

Laraway's Backpack Program assembled holiday baskets for participant families thanks to the generosity of the following: Picasso, Green Mountain Coffee, Yankee Dollar, Hoagies, Hannaford, Costco, Darn Tough Socks, Vermont Originals, Waterbury Family Dentistry, Echo

Leahy Center, Morrisville House of Pizza, United Church of Johnson, Thompson's Flour Shop, RG's Turning Heads, Concept2, Power Play Sports, Laughing Moon Chocolates, Family Dollar, DJ's, Bee's Knees, Head Shed, Lovin' Cup Café, Northern Highlights, Tilton & Company

**THANK YOU!**

Laraway goes GREEN!

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