



Empowering Youth
Strengthening Families
Building Community

LARAWAY

YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES



December 2014

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W. Duncan Tingle

Greg Stefanski
Executive Director



The Gift of Time

"What presents do I still need to buy?" "What gifts do I want this year?"

The holiday scramble is on. This is the time of year when we can get caught up in the big exchange of presents. Even small children find themselves frantically composing a list of their most desired items from Santa.

Reflecting on this past year, I am reminded that one of, if not the most precious gifts, is the time people have given me. It may have been a moment to give advice. It may have been time to let me vent about a frustration. It may have been a moment just to make me laugh.

Every day at Laraway, we see the effect of people's time on the lives of

our kids, whether it's from a teacher, a sibling, a case manager, a local business owner, a mentor, a coach or a foster parent. A person's time can have a far greater impact on us than anything we might find at a store.

During this holiday season, I invite you to consider how you might be generous with the gift of your time with a friend, a family member, a loved one or neighbor with whom you've lost touch.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas, a wonderful holiday season and a Happy New Year!

Greg Stefanski, M.Ed.
Executive Director
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Harvest Week: Celebrating kids' connection to the land

The cafeteria showcased foods grown in our school garden, tended by students and staff. Wheat was threshed. Garlic was planted. Delicious pies were baked. This is what **Harvest Week** looked like at Laraway.

A downhill sack race was a sight to see as students scrambled to the finish line. Additional activities included a relay race, a leaf jumping competition, and pumpkin carving for all.

Keith Morris, owner of Johnson's **Willow Crossing Farm**, served as guest speaker, encouraging students to be good stewards of our natural spaces. With thirty-nine acres on our campus farmstead, celebrating the harvest is a natural fit.

Laraway featured in Court House Art Show

The walls of the **Lamoille County Court House** were adorned with art conceived and created by young people at Laraway Youth & Family Services. The show was organized by **Laraway School Art Teacher Kristen Murphy**.

Members of the community were invited to attend an Art Reception at the Lamoille County Court House at 154 Main Street in Hyde Park on the evening of Friday, October 10th. Light refreshments were served.

Laraway was invited to organize the show by **Judge David Williams**, a strong advocate of bringing art to the Court House. Sharing our youths' creativity is a way to say thank you!



Your Gifts in Action

Laraway School staff are setting up their annual **Holiday Shop**. Each student chooses small presents for family members with wrapping services from Laraway Elves. Thank you to community members who donated new and gently-used shop items.

Backpack's Family Basket Project is underway. Thanks to the generosity of local businesses and clubs, each Backpack family will receive a basket of food and items to make their holidays brighter.



Thank you to our supporters!

Individuals

- Anonymous
- Lori Beane
- Idoline Duke, Scheerer Family Foundation
- Victoria Dutcher
- Jim Heath
- Janice Lovell
- Millie Marron
- Pamela Polhemus
- Pat & Nick Racheotes
- Brenda "Granny" Snow
- Sarah Squirrel & Chris Piatek
- Berta & Matt Pykosz
- Bill & Kate Schubart, Tulgey Wood Foundation
- Stuart Senghas
- Katherine Stamper
- Kay Stephenson
- Nancy Tingle
- Carole Trowbridge
- Sherman White
- David Williams



Businesses/Organizations

- Ben & Jerry's
- Foote Brooke Organic Farm
- Great Scapes Farm
- Maurices
- Merchants Bank
- Morrisville Rotary Club
- Notch Above Building & Design, LLC
- Percy Farm Corn Maze
- St. John's in the Mountains Church
- VT Council on the Arts
- VT Fly Shop, Outfitter & Guide Service

In Honor of Duncan Tingle

Note: If your name was inadvertently missed, please contact Katherine at KatherineS@Laraway.org or (802) 635-2805 x 106



Youth Voices: Poetry Game Night By B.L.

**My homework is done
My report is complete.
My family knows I'm itching
to compete!
A board game, a card game, a
word game, pick one.
For I've played every game
under the sun.
My family looks around to
find a way out.
You cannot escape our game
night I shout.
We've had this tradition since
I was just four,
When we used my cereal
snack to keep score.
Roll the dice, spin the spinner,
it's time to begin
I crow like a rooster, tonight I
will win.
I play by the book.
I'm certainly no cheat!
It's gamesmanship that
makes me a game athlete.
While I play the game fair,
I am fair game.
For the end of the game is
always the same.
I start every game
with a plan to defeat.
In the end, I am always the
one who gets beat**

Seasonal Tale: Maggie's Tree

Feeding the hungry...

Visiting with seniors...

Caring for homeless pets in shelters...

Planting trees for generations to come...

Pennies for Presents...

Delivering a tree on Christmas Eve?

Laraway is an organization with as many stories as people who have come through our doors since we first opened (in a barn) in Waterville, Vermont over 40 years ago.

Laraway recently lost a dear friend with the passing of **Maggie Miller**, a former volunteer, Board member, and supporter. Maggie lived in a sweet little house in Johnson adorned with Buddhist Prayer Flags. She was a lifelong Episcopalian, a staunch advocate of peace and a stalwart supporter of social justice. Maggie opened many a Laraway graduation ceremony with words of reflection and flowing accolades for students who earned their high school diplomas.

Maggie was a keeper of Laraway's stories. She readily opened her home and made a pot of tea when hosting a staff member who interviewed her for **Laraway's History Project**.

Laraway's story with Maggie continued long after she left our board. Laraway delivered, on Christmas Eve, a tree, festooned with decorations, many made by our youth.

This ritual of sharing the holiday spirit with Maggie played itself out over and over with Laraway Executive Directors **past and present**. Youth accompanying the deliveries were often treated to cookies and tea with Maggie. These same youth, when passing her home in winter, would say to staff, "We need to stop by to stack wood for Maggie." And they did, on more than one occasion.

It was only in the last few years that Maggie told us she no longer needed a Laraway tree delivered to her door.

The children and youth we serve have been dealt some difficult cards in life. **The holiday season can be a particularly sad time as memories of sometimes unhappy Christmases past can darken the experience of Christmas present.**



A hallmark of Laraway's programs with youth involves engaging them in **HELPING OTHERS**. Helping others brings real good to the world while enhancing one's sense of self and one's sense of self-esteem.

Laraway youth are engaged in serving meals at the **Johnson Community Lunch**, visiting with seniors for card playing and conversation, playing with homeless cats and dogs in shelter, and raising money for presents and toys for other children in our community who also experience need.

John F. Kennedy said, "To those whom much is given, much is expected."

It might be said that, to whom less is given, it is equally important to find a way—a creative way—to give.



MISSION

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

Rich Farrell, LICSW: A gift and a privilege

“All of us face obstacles in life, but most of us have others to fall back on,” said **Rich Farrell, Assistant Dir. of Substitute Care**, our therapeutic foster care program.

“Many of our youth are forced to rely solely on themselves to try to make meaning of all of the obstacles and hurt they’ve experienced.”

“These kids get up and

face the world, putting their best foot forward. They are endearing, powerful, and incredibly resilient. What a gift and a privilege it is to be a part of their lives.”

Rich started working at Laraway in 1995 as a residential counselor.

Thank you, Rich, for your many years of dedication and service.



LARAWAY
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GO GREEN

If you would like to receive our quarterly newsletter via email, please send a message to KatherineS@Laraway.org and type GO GREEN in the subject line. We'll take it from there.

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.