

VIPS Happenings



Falmouth Volunteers In Public Schools

Volume 20, No. 1 Fall 2008

VIPS Welcomes Start of 2008-09 School Year

Just when we were getting used to summer, September arrived and sent us **back-to-school!** Always a busy time for families, school personnel, and the VIPS office, this fall has been no exception. Thanks to our eager volunteers and organized **VIPS Building Coordinators**, the process of entering data from the Volunteer Registration Forms and CORI forms is complete. Many of you have already begun volunteering—thank you! For those of you ready to begin, we ask that **if you have not yet been contacted by a classroom teacher, specialist, or VIPS program leader, feel free to contact the VIPS building coordinators (see list, below) and remind them of your interests or preferences.** We *will* find a place for you—sometimes it just takes a while for the schools to get fully operational so that volunteers can be utilized most effectively.

2008-09 VIPS Building Coordinators

<u>Falmouth High School</u> Ursula Bohnenberger Janice Forrester Lauren Powers	<u>Lawrence</u> Maria Jones Michele Lino	<u>Morse Pond</u> Tina Broderick Jenn Gonsalves	<u>East Falmouth Elementary</u> Lori Bianchi <i>Coordinator needed!</i>
<u>Mullen-Hall Elementary</u> Lynn Briggs Lyn Cenzalli	<u>North Falmouth Elementary</u> Chrissy Nolan-Pacheco Cathy Welch	<u>Teaticket Elementary</u> Kelly Geist Donna Randleman Donna Sherwood	

Important Reminders

“Why is it so important to **log my volunteer hours?**” That is a question frequently asked of the VIPS staff and building coordinators. The answer is simple: when seeking financial support for VIPS programming, VIPS must show evidence of ‘community support’ and ‘program sustainability.’ Your volunteer hours—between 33,000-40,000 each school year—show more than that support: they are proof of your enthusiasm, dedication, and commitment! When VIPS needs to show numbers, we like to be prepared. **We will happily take your hours by phone, fax, e-mail, in person, or on the log sheet—whatever is easiest for you!** Thank you.

Make a Difference

If you have one hour a week during the school year, we would love to talk to you about the **VIPS school-based mentoring programs.** We have many students in need of a mentor—at each of the K-12 schools—and the rewards are great. No experience is necessary, and VIPS will provide new mentors with an introductory session, ongoing support and training, and access to veteran mentors and school counselors who can offer advice and answer questions. *If you are a good listener and think you might enjoy making a difference in a student’s life, we’d love to hear from you!* Call us today at (508) 548-1621 or send an e-mail to vips@falmouth.k12.ma.us. You’ll be glad you did.



VIPS ended the month of September with its seventh annual **Feasts of Falmouth and Beyond** fundraiser on Saturday, September 27th. For our readers who enjoy weather trivia, that was the day that East Falmouth held the record throughout New England for the most rainfall: 2.7 inches, for a 2-day total of 6 inches! Even the torrential downpours and flooding in the tent couldn’t dampen the enthusiasm—or overshadow the amazing food served by our **21 participating restaurants, chefs, and caterers.** Approximately 600 people donned boots and raingear to sample culinary delights including chicken marsala, sandwiches, curry, eggplant involtini, and seafood newburg, sushi, shepherd’s pie, chicken pot pie, lobster ravioli, chowders, and salads, to fruit pies, homemade ice creams, cake, and cookies. Thanks to the generosity of the participating

restaurants, and event sponsors—**TD Banknorth, Roche Bros., Island Queen, Chapman, Cole & Gleason, Allied Cesspool, Citizen’s Bank, Falmouth Road Race, and Taylor Rental**—the event was wet but not a washout! VIPS sincerely appreciates the many **volunteers** who helped make this year’s Feasts memorable, not only for the weather, but for their cheerful attitudes and willingness to take care of each and every detail. Special thanks

to **Cheryl Atherton**, a.k.a. Sister Spin, for helping us dance away the clouds—inside the tent, at

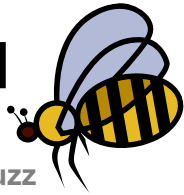


least. Photos from this year’s event can be viewed on our website at www.falmouthvips.org under “Events.”

Photos by John Rega

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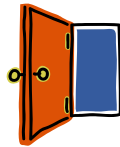
About VIPS

Falmouth Volunteers In Public Schools (VIPS) was initiated in 1982 as a way to increase interaction between Falmouth schools and the community. Today, 26 years later, VIPS has grown from eight volunteers at Falmouth High School to over 1,100 volunteers in all seven schools. VIPS provides the schools with an organized, reliable volunteer corps that supplements and enriches the curriculum. Volunteers are given the opportunity to use their talents, time and energy in creative, worthwhile ways. Each year, volunteers log thousands of hours—over 35,000 last year alone—while supporting the students, faculty, administration and the community. Local businesses contribute to this unique partnership by sponsoring events, providing tax-deductible contributions, donating raffle and auction items, and providing release time or support for employee volunteers.

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Share Your Ideas!

VIPS is looking for your input and ideas about...well, everything! Do you have an idea for a newsletter article? Is someone worthy of recognition? Is there a program that could use some support? Do you have ideas for the VIPS website? How can VIPS be a part of your school events? Let us know! Call or e-mail us anytime!

School Buzz

Did you know...artists, dancers, authors, scientists, firemen, police officers, lawyers, musicians, athletes, veterinarians, fashion designers, architects, photographers...all spent time in Falmouth's schools last year? While some entertained an entire school's student body, others spoke to one classroom or grade level, or demonstrated their talents during an assembly or demonstration. Some visitors came for free, as a favor to a teacher, student, or child; other appearances were paid for with



funds raised by school PTOs or grants awarded to schools. What do these **visitors to our local schools** have in common? Their presence—like that of all VIPS volunteers—enhances the educational experience of Falmouth students.

Do you have a special talent, hobby, collection, or interest that you would like to share? Please let us know!



Congratulations to **Jay Hauptmann**, 5th grade teacher at **Morse Pond**! Jay is Wal-Mart's 2007-08 Teacher of the Year for Falmouth. In recognition of this honor, Jay received a \$100 gift card to Wal-Mart and Morse Pond School receives a check for \$1,000. Ted Burt, community liaison for Wal-Mart, says Hauptmann has received nominations every year. "Jay was the clear choice," says Burt, "due to the strong comments about his superior teaching, his commitment to his students, and his involvement in the community."

The **Parent Connection Series** is back! VIPS, in collaboration with the district's office of Pupil Personnel Services, designed a series of **presentations geared for parents, mentors, guardians, and interested community members**. Each seminar features a guest speaker or panelists whose expertise provides background information, solutions, and creative approaches to understanding some of the issues facing our students. Some topics are intended for parents of younger students, while others are suitable for a wider audience. A complete schedule can be found on the VIPS website, www.falmouthvips.org. For more information, contact the VIPS office at (508) 548-1621.

Inside VIPS

VIPS is pleased to welcome two new program leaders to our ranks. **Sharon Sodekson** is the new **mentor programs leader**, overseeing both **Project RISE** and **FHS Mentors**. Sharon is a familiar face to many of us, having worked in local retail stores including her own store, Sharon's, for several years. Sharon's experience working with youth and adults in the areas of self-esteem and self-awareness helped her hit the ground running this fall, one of the busiest times of the year for mentoring! Sharon has been meeting with all of the mentors currently working with students, as well as each of the school adjustment and guidance counselors. If you have been thinking about becoming a mentor, now is the time! Give Sharon a call at (508) 472-8548, or send an e-mail to sharonsodekson14@yahoo.com.



We are very pleased to welcome recently-retired Lawrence School science teacher **Lynn Parks** to the **Cross-Age Science Teaching (CAST) program**. Lynn and her colleagues worked with CAST program creator, Molly Cornell, for many years. The program trains 8th graders as "science buddies" to local elementary students. Lynn now brings her familiarity and fondness for the program to the role of coordinator, with support from a **Falmouth Education Foundation** grant awarded to VIPS last spring. This year's focus will be on the third grade Energy unit. Groups of 8th graders will participate in after-school sessions to learn hands-on activities from the third grade curriculum and tips on working with younger students. The students will then make a series of visits to an elementary school where they will meet up with their third grade "science buddies" and work on the energy activities together.



Spotlight: Teachers as Volunteer Tutors

For many students, finding a suitable block of time for homework means waiting until after extracurricular or family activities. By then, any problems students encounter may go left unsolved, causing stress and frustration. Where can students turn for homework assistance?

In Falmouth, help comes in the form of teachers—and retired teachers—who volunteer their time to offer free tutoring assistance outside of school to any students in need of extra instruction.

Lisa Lopes, a math teacher at FHS, has been tutoring students at the Teen Center for seven years. “It started as a way to keep the center open for kids one night a week,” explains Lopes, who says the convenience of being able to access help in the evening caught on quickly. She said it’s particularly helpful for athletes and students whose involvement in extracurricular activities makes it impossible to attend after-school sessions. In general, Lopes says she often sees more students come for tutoring at the Teen Center than those who attend her after-school hours. “I think [the students] enjoy the laid back atmosphere or the change of venue that an outside location offers.”

Fellow FHS math teachers **Tricia Bourgeault** and **Andrea (Lindwall) Gennaro** also provide off-campus, evening sessions for their math tutoring. Now at the Teen Center on Tuesday evenings, (and formerly at Coffee Obsession and Starbucks with fellow teacher **Anna Cabral**.) Bourgeault says she started offering the evening session as a way to help students when their questions actually come up. “Most high school students haven’t even thought about homework before 5 p.m.,” she explains. “As lists of questions pile up at night, [student] frustration levels increase, leading them to become extremely overwhelmed and [they] shut down.” Bourgeault and Gennaro have taught “almost every [main] course offered” and both feel comfortable helping students. They have also invited National Math Honor Society students to tutor specific students, giving the Honor Society students an opportunity to earn required volunteer hours.

Retired math teacher **Martha Vaccaro** offers math tutoring for Lawrence School students at West Falmouth Library on Thursday evenings and after school at Lawrence on Wednesdays. She began in 2004 when she learned that the number of 8th graders taking Algebra would double. “I realized that there would be even more students in need of help and many were unable to stay after school because of [other commitments],” she says. At the same time, Vaccaro heard that the library would be opening one evening each week, so she asked if she could use it to offer free math help since it is close to her home. At first, Vaccaro handled as many as 14 students per week, with occasional help from a retired engineer. Now she has regular help from **Diane Regis**, a retired teacher from off-Cape. “It is really a bargain,” says Vaccaro. “When there are only a few students, they almost get the equivalent of private tutoring.” So far this year, Vaccaro says only 3 or 4 students have been showing up, but she says it’s likely to “pick up after report cards” come out.

Math is not the only subject for which students can find extra help. FHS English department head **Joanne Holcomb** offers free SAT and MCAS preparation, and general writing assistance to “any student who needs it.” Over the past four years, Holcomb has run a 5-week college essay workshop after school, with assistance from **Judy Garvey**, former head of guidance at FHS. This year, 28 seniors are participating. Holcomb meets lots of great kids. “I get to see kids feel good about themselves—and I read a lot of great work,” she says.

Bourgeault, too, finds the service rewarding, calling it “one of the most worthwhile things” she’s done in her teaching career. “My students can see that I care that they understand the material. Andrea and I highly encourage the students to come with homework questions or review questions *before* a test or quiz, not after they have done poorly,” she says.

Lopes considers the tutoring sessions so valuable that she would like to see the offerings expanded to include parents. “I think it is critical that parents can communicate with their kids about their math homework,” she says. “When the kids are struggling, why not have the students come to a tutoring session and have the parent sit in to get a [better] understanding.” Though her idea is still taking shape, Lopes’ enthusiasm may help it move forward quickly. “We can do wonders for our students,” she says, “not to mention the reinforcement that we will develop along family lines.”

Volunteer Profile: Jill Nehro



Project RISE mentor **Jill Nehro** moved to Falmouth from Connecticut three years ago. Once here, the former

special education teacher turned child therapist says she missed working with kids. Nehro read about the need for school-based mentors in the newspaper and decided to give it a try. “The program is just phenomenal,” she raves. “I love that a mentor can follow a student right through—if the student wants to. That continuity and consistency is great. There is nothing like it in Connecticut,” she says. “Schools have limited resources and need to prioritize. Some kids—those without glaring problems—can get lost in the shuffle,” says Nehro, adding that the mentoring program can help give those students a boost. Nehro has been meeting with her student, now at **Lawrence School**, for three years. She says the student—who is very shy—relates well to her. “She’s very good at art and has writing talent,” says Nehro. “Her counselor, **Jeff Cappuziello**, has been great; very supportive.”

The most important role of mentors is the ability to listen; to offer support and encouragement without being judgmental, says VIPS mentor program leader **Sharon Sodekson**. **Project RISE** (Raising Interest and Self-Esteem) is geared for students in grades K-8, while the **FHS Mentor Program** targets high school students. In both, school counselors play a key role in helping identify students who may benefit by having a mentor. They interact with the VIPS staff to provide support for students and mentors.

Nehro says it has been great getting to know her student. She also finds the interaction with other mentors beneficial. While at **Morse Pond**, a few of the mentors would meet with their students at the same time. “A bunch of us would share the space,” says Nehro. “After we’d had time to talk together with our students, one of the mentors would get everyone together for a game. He could really



Profile (cont'd)

get the interaction going! It was great for the students and for us."

VIPS mentors get together every six weeks for meetings. Some meetings feature a speaker who presents information on topics relevant to things school-age children may be experiencing or exposed to: teasing and bullying, healthy relationships, self-esteem. They also offer a chance for mentors to share advice and ideas, and pose questions to each other. Both veteran and new mentors enjoy the opportunity to support each other in this way. "Mentoring," says Nehro, "provides an opportunity to be able to assist a child in adolescence, with the struggles all kids go through: academic challenges, fitting in, and living up to the demands and pressures of teachers, families, and friends. You get much more back than you give," she says.

Help Wanted!

- Project Inquire is currently seeking volunteers interested in working one-on-one with a student on an independent investigation lasting approximately 6-8 weeks. **Project Inquire** is geared for students in grades 4-6 who are interested in going 'above and beyond' the regular curriculum, investigating a subject of his/her choice. The volunteer will work with the student once a week for about an hour to come up with a topic, help focus and investigate the topic, and decide upon a way to present the findings. In the past, students have worked with their Project Inquire mentor to study topics ranging from sharks to stars and have presented their findings orally, in song or verse, or by creating posters, murals, or books.
- We are also looking for someone to help **coordinate the Project Inquire program** with VIPS.
- VIPS is seeking an additional **building coordinator** at **East Falmouth Elementary** to assist with duties ranging from filling staff needs for volunteers to assisting with volunteer hour logs.
- VIPS is looking for volunteers to help out in the classrooms at North Falmouth. If you have some time available, please let us know.

Interested? Want to know more? Call or e-mail us today!

...a community service provided by **ENTERPRISE PUBLISHING** of Cape Cod



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