

Four Rivers Currents

May / June 2019

From the Principal's Desk...

RESILIENCE THROUGH COMMUNITY

Each June my Currents column is a reprint of my welcome comments at graduation. While as personal and intimate as usual, this year's ceremony came at a particularly challenging time for our community. May we embrace the moment, learn from it, and move forward together.

It is my honor to welcome all of you to the twelfth graduation ceremonies of the Four Rivers Charter Public School.

While filled with pride and joy for the individuals sitting on this stage, I stand here also with a heavy heart, given multiple recent tragedies our community has suffered. At rehearsal, I asked the graduates for their input on whether it felt appropriate that I try to balance these two feelings in my welcome. One student spoke up and said yes, with the rest offering their snaps of agreement. I promised them I would do my best to bring us all back up. So I have one big idea to share, plus three highlights about this class.

Meaghan Burns was a student at Four Rivers from 7th grade through 11th. As reported in her obituary, 23-year-old Meaghan was the innocent victim of senseless gun violence while trying to help a friend. Meaghan was a sailor in the Navy and planned to work in healthcare. Governor Baker ordered flags at all state buildings be lowered to half-staff on Monday in honor of Navy sailor Meaghan Burns. Ursula Snow was a 7th grader at Four Rivers who wrote poetry, ran cross-country, and brightened our days through her vibrant energy and compassionate actions. She was 13. With thoughts to their families, how on earth are we supposed to recover from these losses?

Resilience is what allows us to experience loss and still return to living. The idea I have to share was shared with me by my neighbors, Kyle and SerahRose (*article by Michael Ungar, researcher in the field of social and psychological resilience at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada*). The short version is that resilience--the ability to bounce back--has more to do with community than individual determination.

This statement might be surprising to these graduates, as I and their teachers have been talking with them for years now about character and what they can do as individuals. Grit, growth mindset, perseverance are indeed necessary to your well-being, but they are not sufficient. (You will be impressive in your college classes if you start talking about "necessary but not sufficient"). There is a role for motivation and effort, but it might not be enough to make the difference between bouncing back/moving forward or floundering.

Community can increase resilience, according to one researcher and his colleagues. Individuals with community resources do far better when faced with challenge than individuals without resources, no matter how rugged one might be. What kind of resources? According to the researcher, "The kind that get you through the inevitable crises that life throws our way. Sick days at work. Some savings or an extended family who can take you in. Neighbors or a congregation willing to bring over a casserole, shovel your driveway or help care for your children while you are doing whatever you need to do to get through the moment. Communities with

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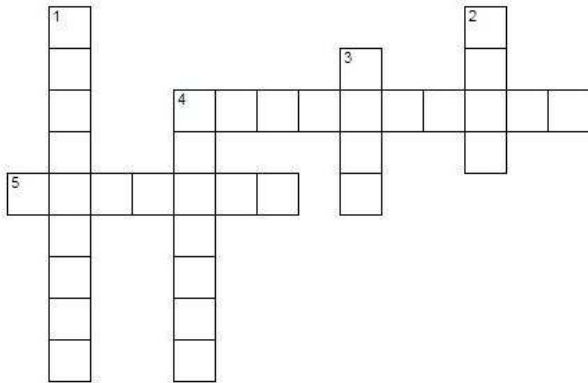


Peter Garbus, Principal

Grade 7 News

Come what May

These photos will give you the clues you need to learn what 7th grade has been up to



ACROSS:

4 -What are these Gummi Bears doing in social studies class? Teaching us about Greek _____, of course!

5 - Why are there Moths hiding all over Ms. Locke's room? Because the moth-eating monster is coming to teach us a lesson about _____ selection.

DOWN:

1 - What started as a plan for math field work, took on a new life as we were inspired to action to support our classmate. We raised \$4523.89 in our Four Rivers 4 km Walk-for-Caring for Ursula. Thank you to everyone who supported our efforts.

2 - _____ of the Tools, aka Ancient Tech Mad-



ness, took place in May, not March.

3 - These pictures show us working together for team-work challenges. We are _____, not passengers.

4 - The kick off for our social studies exploration of ancient technology, agriculture and food production, as well as our science observations of seeds and sprouts.



KEY

Grade 8 News

rites of passage

Passage time is upon us! The 8th grade has fully embarked on their transition expedition as they prepare themselves for the passage to high school. Beginning with field work at The Path of Life Sculpture Garden in Vermont, students have been thinking of their own journey thus far in their academic career. They are creating journey maps that symbolize the path they have traveled, writing poetry about where they are now and, through their passage presentations, looking forward to what they hope to make of their future.



PHOTOS: Eighth grade crews in the Path of Life Sculpture Garden in Vermont. From left to right: Ms. Farwell's crew, Ms. MacNeish's crew and Ms. Sidel's crew.

In Math and Science class, students are working on the more tangible side of passage, trying to satisfy the goal of safe (and dry) passage across the Green River. Using only cardboard, glue and paint, students are striving to build boats that will help them safely pass to the other side of the river and back. Any and all groups who are successful will be invited to take part in the cardboard boat race where success is usually determined by the group that has built the most watertight boat.

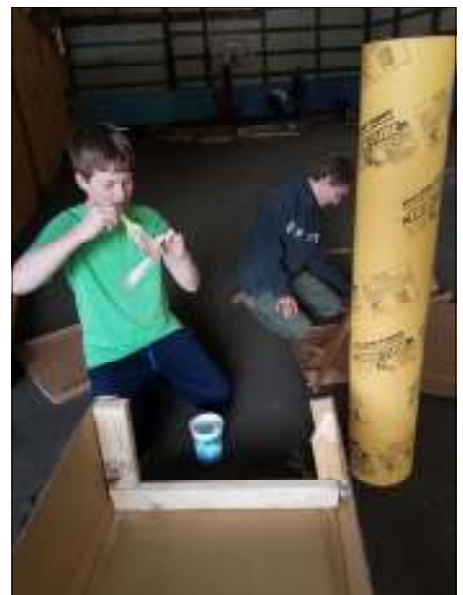
Families are invited to come to the Green River Recreation area on Nash's Mill Rd, Wednesday, June 12th. First launch will be at about 9:30. The final race, for any boats that survive the first passage, will happen at approximately 10:30. Rain date is Tuesday, June 11th.



CARD BOARD BOAT CHALL- ENG

Left: Lilly
and Molly;

Right:
Gabe & TJ



DIVISION 2 NEWS

ENGLISH

Ninth graders in English and social studies are wrapping up the Immigration Expedition. In their English class literature circles, students read and discussed books connected to immigration. Titles included *We Are Displaced* by Malala Yousafzai, *American Street* by Ibi Zoboi, *Brooklyn* by Colm Tóibín, *The Lines We Cross* by Randa Abdel-Fattah, and *Inside Out and Back Again* by Thanhha Lai. Now students are researching different issues connected to immigration in preparation for debates. Some of the topics they will debate include the citizenship question on the 2020 census; whether there should be a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants; whether a border wall is an essential component of border security; whether immigrants should be detained in detention centers after they cross the border; and whether there should be specific limits to types of immigrants entering the country.

In tenth grade English, students read Shakespeare's comedy *As You Like It* and saw it performed at Smith College at the end of April. They then created performances of their own connected to the play. Currently, as part of the Why War? Expedition, students are researching different topics connected to the U.S. military (such as its use of drones; its involvement in Syria; and whether women should be required to register for selective service) and will finish the year by delivering persuasive speeches on their topics.

TENTH GRADE TRIP TO WASHINGTON DC

The annual 10th grade trip to Washington, D.C. took place on May 28-30. Students analyzed the monuments on the National Mall, considering their connection to the wars they memorialize. They visited the Smithsonian Museums and interviewed experts at the Pentagon, the Center for Strategic International Studies, and the State Department. They bonded through down time at the HighRoad Hostel in Adams Morgan, and despite unexpected events and a few schedule shifts, the students bonded with each other and



had a meaningful time.

Left photo, the class poses in front of the Capital Building. Above, Fiona and Charlotte imagine what its like to chair the House Rules Committee, like our Congressman, Jim McGovern.

DIVISION 3 NEWS

SCIENCE

Physics students have been using math and Newton's laws to predict and evaluate the flight of model rockets. Often flying hundreds of feet into the sky, the small rockets we launched required students to take careful measurements and match their calculations to the predicted flight paths in order to guarantee a successful flight. Though rainy mornings and gusty winds meant that a few of our rockets couldn't be recovered, the majority of the vessels lived to fly again. By the end of the unit, students had predicted the peak velocities and accelerations of their rockets as well as graphed the flight paths of multiple launches. It says a lot about the resiliency of these seniors that they were willing to push themselves and literally do rocket science so close to the end of their year.

Juniors wrapped up their arsenic research early this month and prepared their polished research articles to send off to Dr. Julian Tyson at UMass. He'll use their findings to direct future studies in order to improve testing methods for inorganic arsenic. Next they are turning their attention to reaction rates and chemical equilibrium. They've pondered the implications of energy and reaction speed, using devices such as spectrophotometers to generate data to back up their claims. We'll use Le Chatelier's principle to understand the effects of stresses on dynamic equilibria and use math to express whether the equilibrium favors reactants or products.

ENGLISH & SOCIAL STUDIES

Juniors have begun their Reader's Theater expedition in English and History. In this expedition, they study the stories of human rights activists from all over the world and the causes to which these people have devoted their lives. We balance in-depth discussion of activism and the content of the issues themselves with practice in performance and theater. The culminating product of this expedition will be a Reader's Theater of Ariel Dorfman's play *Speak Truth To Power: Voices From Beyond the Dark*. The event will be held at the Shea Theater in Turners Falls on Tuesday, June 11th at 7pm. Donations are welcome, and all proceeds benefit the Traprock Center for Peace and Justice.

Juniors are also working on the tenth edition of the *Undercurrents*, a satirical newspaper about Four Rivers. Students have spent the semester learning about satire, and now they're writing their own pieces to provide some good-natured commentary about our school and life as a teenager. In preparation, students Skyped with a senior editor at *The Onion*, a world-famous satirical publication, and asked questions about the craft of writing satire. Stay tuned for this year's edition, available at the end of the school year.

In Creative Writing, the end of senior year means compiling their best work into a final portfolio. Students spent the last two weeks of their semester in peer groups work-shopping their writing and doing written reflections as part of their final project. The course culminated in a Writer's Cafe on Friday, May 17th during the school day where students shared their writing and celebrated their accomplishments. Good luck, seniors!

MATH

Juniors have been working mostly with quadratic functions, exploring transformations, converting between different forms of equations, and comparing methods of finding significant points and features of graphs. They used these skills in various real world applications such as business, sports, and physics. Most recently, they used cubic functions to optimize volume and model possible boxes that could be constructed out of limited material.

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police, social workers, home-care workers, fire departments, ambulances and food banks. Employment insurance, pension plans or financial advisers to help you through a layoff.”

One case study he shares is the aftermath of wildfires in Alberta, Canada, where it mattered more whether families could file insurance claims faster and get bank loans than how perseverant they were. After the first responders, insurance agents and bankers were the heroes.

Those closest to us within our environments – our families, friends, and colleagues – have an enormous effect on our collective capacity to thrive. We need families, workplaces, communities, health-care providers, governments --schools-- to provide us with sufficient care and support.

As Ursula and Meaghan’s families and our school move forward from our loss, we’re going to need the resources of our community to help us be resilient.

Which brings me back to you who are sitting on this stage. Schools can create community. Our school has done its best over these years to surround you with community and supportive infrastructure to help you grow and be successful. Curriculum, crew, school-wide learning outcomes, student-led conferences and passage presentations, projects that take you beyond the classroom walls, collaboration and restorative circles--the structures of our school are intended to build your skills and knowledge, but also to envelope you in community.

As you graduate today, you move on from this community. You will find yourself in new places, with new people, and new communities. One of the hardest things, we hear from graduates, is finding new friends, connections, and resources in these new settings. If you forget everything else from what I’ve said today, remember this: your ability to know what you need, to self-advocate, and to seek out resources are key to helping you thrive in any community.

Amidst loss, I remain filled with appreciation and gratitude. We have shared with your parents, family, and friends the privilege of watching you grow up. I have three highlights of this class to capture something about their collective spirit.

One goes back to the start of eleventh grade. Due to unforeseen circumstances, our plans for their orientation overnight fell through. This group, or some vocal portion, claimed conspiracy, that certain powers that be never liked their class and had intentionally denied them their overnight. Well-intended as we are, we quickly organized a substitute experience, an overnight at school. With perhaps two-thirds of the class joining (reluctantly?), they made the best of their situation. I felt grateful that night with the scene of this group sitting in a circle out in the parking lot, engaged in conversation. They gave up their complaining, they rolled with the situation, and they found a way to make the night their own. I also feel grateful that they gave up the narrative that we were out to get them.

Which leads me to a second highlight, from the end of eleventh grade. As I understand it, this group decided to take matters into their own hands and to right the wrong that had been perpetrated on them. They planned their own overnight camping trip, leaving immediately from school on the very last day. This was a Four Rivers first, and perhaps the start of a new tradition.

On a similar theme of originality and initiative, a group in this class started a weekly banana bread baking contest. Each week, 2 to 4 bakers brought in their creations -- usually a variation on the standard, which was so appropriate for them--inviting official judging from me and sharing with their classmates.

This afternoon, we honor 29 students who have completed our requirements for graduation. We will hear words from the three senior advisors introducing us to each of the graduates that sit before you. You may have come to today's ceremonies knowing one or a few of these fine young people. You will leave knowing something more about each one of them. In addition, the featured speakers of the day are members of the Class of 2019 who have chosen to share something of their experiences here, what they've learned, and what they carry forward. ~~ Peter Garbus, Principal ~~

ULTIMATE NEWS

The Four Rivers boys varsity ultimate team had its best season ever with a 30 win and 3 loss season. This included winning tournaments at NMH, Four Rivers, RVAL, and the Pioneer Valley Invitational. The PVI win was especially impressive as the best we had ever done previously was 9th place. Teams come from all over the Northeast for this event and we defeated the team from Ottawa 11 - 10 in the final. The state tournament saw us finish second, which is also our best finish ever. This is a young team with over half the players coming from the 10th grade so the future looks bright. ~ *Coach Terry Plotkin*

Girls varsity ultimate had quite an amazing season! We had only 3 losses the entire season, all three of which were to Amherst during the final game of 3 different tournaments. We won the Four Rivers tournament, came in second and won the spirit award at the Amherst Invitational, came in 5th at the RVAL tournament in the boys division, and finished second in the state. The team worked so well together as a unit both on and off the field. They supported each other both physically and emotionally - a truly incredible connection to see as a coach. I am so proud of what they accomplished this season and I believe they are proud of themselves as well. ~ *Coach Dovrah Plotkin*

Congratulations to two Four Rivers alums Kai DeLorenzo and Lucia Mason for winning the Division 3 College Ultimate Nationals in Dallas this year. Kai plays for the Middlebury men's team and Lucia for the women's team from Oberlin.

THIS SUMMER

Last call for signing up for the Four Rivers Summer Ultimate Intensive held at the school from June 24 -28, 9 - 3 each day. This is a great way to improve on your skills, have fun, and meet new and old friends. Contact Terry Plotkin at tplotkin@fourriverscharter.org or visit the website <https://fourriverssummerultimate.weebly.com/>

Left: Girls Varsity Ultimate Team



NURSE'S NOTES

Measles cases are on the rise in Massachusetts. Immunization is the recommended prevention. If your child has not been immunized please consider arranging for this vaccine administration over the summer. Some of these diseases have short and long term consequences:

Chicken Pox (meningitis); Measles (permanent hearing loss and chronic pain); Mumps (short term inflammation of multiple body organs including testicles, ovaries, pancreas and brain; a long term complication is deafness)

When should children and staff be excluded from school if there is a confirmed case of measles? The following are general guidelines for exclusion. Please note that all decisions to exclude children and staff should be made in consultation with the local health department (LHD). Your LHD can help you determine the correct dates for exclusion. Exclude children and staff who have measles until they are no longer contagious (through 4 days after rash onset). Exclude exposed children and staff members who do not have proof of immunity from day 5 after the first exposure through day 21 following the last exposure.

<https://www.cdc.gov/measles/about/complications.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/diseases/child/mumps.html>

Contact your MD for further questions. Have a great and safe summer.

~ Jeanne Milton, RN ~

NOTICE

Four Rivers Charter Public School is required to adhere to the federal requirement: Child Find. We are required to identify, locate and evaluate all children with disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disabilities. The obligation to identify all children who may need education services, includes all children who are suspected of having a disability including children who receive passing grades.

If you are concerned that your child may have a disability or have questions about any special education processes please call Kate Conant Director of Academic Services (kconant@fourriverscharter.org).

Thank You

ADVENTURES IN MOVIE MAKING

FOUR RIVERS SUMMER MOVIE MAKING
INTENSIVE

FIVE DAYS OF WRITING, SHOOTING, DIRECTING,
AND EDITING USING ADOBE PREMIERE
JUNE 24TH-28TH 9:00 AM-3:00 PM

For details go to
www.frcps.org/videoIntensive

"This institution is an equal opportunity provider. To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Washington, DC 20254"

248 Colrain Rd., Greenfield, MA 01301

Four Rivers Charter Public School



Four River Charter Public School is dedicated to educating young people for lives of learning and service. The school offers a rigorous academic program aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks and an emphasis on character development for moral and social responsibility. Three central themes – nature, technology and community – pervade the teaching and learning at the school. Four Rivers works closely with parents and seeks both to serve and learn from the many resources of Franklin County.