



FALL 2008

E-ALUMNI NEWS

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A Winning Night Corbit Field Rededication Ceremony Is #1

“Amazing. Perfect. Spectacular. A great family event.” These were just some of the things Victor students, parents, staff and alumni had to say about VCS’ Corbit Field Rededication ceremony held this past September to celebrate the completion of the new turf field which was part of the 2007 Capstone Project. The synthetic field at VCS is being used by our physical education classes, athletic teams, youth sports, and the marching band.

The kick-off of the new turf field was about more than a ribbon cutting ceremony honoring the late Alton B. Corbit for whom the field was originally dedicated in 1974, it was about community pride and school spirit, none of which were lacking on this magical eve.

Thousands of people gathered on campus for the event, which was buzzing with activity from one end to the other. There was the feel-good music of the Cheshire Groundhaws, a delectable pulled

pork dinner, a big blue bounce house where children giggled with glee and face painting tables where students of all ages went for blue and gold VCS logos sponsored by the PTSA. If that was not enough, there were sports galore -- from boys and girls soccer games to girls’ tennis, and the first home football game of the season vs. Greece Olympia.

There was no rest for the weary on this special night. During the football game’s half-time, fans enjoyed the phenomenal sights and sounds of the Victor Blue Devils Marching Band and an adorable introduction of our up and coming stars during the Victor Youth Football and Cheerleading presentation.

And, who could forget the fireworks, those brilliant sprays of blue and gold that accented the entire night, culminating in an incredible grand finale following the football game. As one fan so aptly put it, “Wow.”

At the end of the football game, the scoreboard read Victor 35, Visitors 6 but it is safe to say that on this night of revelry, rededication and remembrance, we were all winners. ■

All of the pre- and post-game activities were sponsored by our friends at Appel Osborne Landscape Architecture, Chenango Sports, Christa Construction, Difiore Construction, SWBR Architects and Parents of Victor Youth Football and Cheerleading.

Overhead shot of “New Corbit Field”



Class of 1991 Graduate, Matt Ryan

Unearths ...*Presidents in Our Backyard*

Matt Ryan's primary job at WMHT in Albany, New York is producer/writer of the statewide public affairs show "*New York Now**." When he is not writing and producing for



Matt Ryan hosts WMHT Auction

this busy weekly show, Ryan can be found pitching in as talent for the television station's fundraisers and auctions. Most recently, this 1991 VCS graduate took on yet another project when he produced the hour-long historic documentary, "*Presidents in Our Backyard*." "Whether it's the history of politics, pop culture, or sports, history is the subject I've always been the most fascinated by," Ryan said.

And, it shows in Ryan's latest documentary.

"*President in Our Backyard*" originally debuted in Albany, New York in May of 2008. It has since been broadcast in the Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Binghamton, Watertown and Plattsburgh markets.

To view the "Teddy Roosevelt segment" of Ryan's documentary, go to: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvB1kpCJuRU>

What inspired you to do your recent documentary, "Presidents in Our Backyard?"

When I moved out to the Albany region over a decade ago, I was struck by the fact that there were two U.S. Presidents buried within 30 minutes of each other. The funny thing is both Presidents, Martin Van Buren and Chester Arthur, are two of the least known in our history. I think because of this fact, people didn't seem to give them much of a thought. So when I started my job at the local public television station WMHT, I submitted a treatment to produce a half hour documentary about these two, as well as

FDR (in our southern most viewing area), Ulysses S. Grant (spent the last six weeks of his life just north of Saratoga) and Teddy Roosevelt (found out he had become President in the Adirondacks). I quickly realized I had WAY too much information and good video for a half hour program. So I made it into a sixty minute program, adding Presidents Millard Fillmore and Grover Cleveland who also had Albany connections. I thought in a year where the Presidency would be back in the limelight and the prospect of a New Yorker possibly making it to the White House again (Hillary), it would prove to be a good programming idea.

What major discoveries did you make in producing this?

I think the best thing to come out of the project is that I was able to unearth some of the history of these mostly forgotten Presidents. Just a couple examples.....the saying "O.K." was popularized by followers of Martin Van Buren in 1840 when he ran for re-election. His nickname was "Old Kinderhook" and his supporters would chant "O.K, O.K." during their gatherings. It stuck and sure enough it's something all of us say just about every day. All of us know now, of course, that FDR was physically disabled, but back then he and his team of advisors arranged his schedule so he would never be seen in a wheelchair. In fact, according to the FDR Presidential Library and Museum there are only three known photographs of him in the wheelchair.

How did your education at VCS help prepare you for your career?

I think my love of history was fostered greatly by some of the excellent teachers I had at VCS, in particular Jerry O'Dell, Dan Olson and the incomparable Frank Rychlik. Every one of these men had a tremendous passion about the subject they taught and their genuine enthusiasm was very infectious.

What would you recommend to a VCS student interested in a career in television producing?

Without question I would tell a junior or senior in high school at Victor to seriously look at SUNY Plattsburgh if they are interested in this field. (Ryan is 1995 graduate of the State University of New York at Plattsburgh.) You will pay more to enroll in this major at one of the

“Nie Verkwis Tyd”

VCS Graduate David Culeton Does Not Squander Time

His blog* address donotsquandertime.blogspot.com is a fitting tribute to his work as a Peace Corps volunteer in South Africa but VCS Class of 2001 graduate David Culeton knows it will take much more than a catchy mantra to spark change in the world. It will take people and a passion to make the world a better place. Culeton, who joined the Peace Corps last year, chose the phrase “do not squander time” (In Afrikaans, one of the languages spoken in South Africa, “Nie Verkwis Tyd” means “Do not squander time.”) to be his blog address because he says he hoped it might encourage Victor students who read it to stop squandering their time, too. Whatever the impact, one thing is certain, David Culeton is using his time in South Africa well. From teaching students to building school parks and playgrounds Culeton’s story is one of hope, help, humility, and above all, humanity.

What inspired you to become a Peace Corps Volunteer?

The desire to be in the Peace Corps isn’t something that has always been there, it is something that developed through my various life experiences. I was involved in community service throughout high school but had drifted away from it in college. When I was in college I was immersed in a more diverse community both in Philadelphia and when I did my study abroad in Turkey. After graduating I wanted to travel more and experience more of the world without being a tourist. I feel really lucky to grow

up in a stable household with a supportive family and that I had the educational opportunities that I did. The Peace Corps is giving me the opportunity to experience a different part of the world the way that the people who live here experience, volunteer, and reach out and help those who weren’t as lucky as me.

What lessons have you learned?

I do not know the answer to everything. The American way is not the best and only way. Don’t expect everything to work the same abroad as it does at home. Normal is relative. I have talked to several South Africans who would eat a bowl of tripe (the interior lining of a cow’s stomach) over a T-bone steak any day of the week. Common sense is not common. It must be learned. Be patient. Things in America happen quickly and on a schedule. The subway train departs at 10 minute intervals, people usually arrive at meetings within 5 minutes of the scheduled start time. In South Africa, taxis depart when they fill up and meetings start when everyone gets there.



Culeton with his IsiNdebele language group and their Peace Corps instructor at their swearing in ceremony.



Culeton with his 99 year-old homestay grandmother.



Culeton at the Ndebele King's compound wearing a traditional head piece.

How long will you be in South Africa?

My regular term of service ends in September 2010 but depending on my projects, I may extend it for up to a year if my presence is needed to finish certain projects.

How did your education at VCS prepare you to be a volunteer?

Victor Central Schools provided me with one of the best overall educations that I could have gotten anywhere in the country. The greatest skill that was taught and reinforced constantly was critical thinking and the importance of asking questions. Instead of only being asked “yes or no” questions we were asked “why?” and “how?” We were encouraged to ask questions and taught how to find answers. If somebody doesn’t tell you what you want to know, you don’t ask anyone, and you don’t know how to find it yourself, how are you ever going to find the information you need?

What advice would you give to a student considering a future in the Peace Corps?

Besides studying hard and going to college, move away from home. Go to college somewhere that is far enough away that making a day trip home isn’t worth it. This will give you an opportunity to become less dependent on having easy access to your family. Live in an environment that is largely different from Victor. Most places in the world are nothing like Victor and none of the places that the Peace Corps sends you will be like it. Of the people who have left in my group since we have arrived, all of them have cited being homesick, not being able to handle the culture shock, or missing their family as the main reason.

*Dave’s blog is private. To be invited to view it, you may email Dave at dculeton@gmail.com ■

Fighting for Rwandan Orphans *Class of 2006 Alum Brynn Champney Turns Academics into Altruism*

President John Fitzgerald Kennedy once said; “One person can make a difference.”

Brynn Champney is living proof of this. This VCS class of 2006 graduate is making a difference in more ways than one.

This past spring, as part of a research program at the University of Rochester where she studies Cultural Anthropology, Champney traveled to Rwanda to live in a rural village of genocide survivors*. Champney, who had never traveled abroad before this trip said she was inspired to go to this Central African region after seeing a BBC presentation about child-headed households in Rwanda.

“I wanted to learn about how culture is produced when children raise other children,” she said.

Champney not only learned about this phenomenon, she lived amongst it from June until mid August. “My village consisted of 47 child-headed households and 60 widow-headed households with adopted orphans. There was no electricity, plumbing or water and only three to five people in the village spoke conversational English.” Champney said.

Champney was so moved and inspired by her journey that recently she solicited the help of Victor’s senior high Leadership class to raise money for her new-found Rwandan friends and family. To date, the class has held a Harlem Wizards basketball game and a high school dance. All of the proceeds from these events will go towards Champney’s host family and village.

“It will help my host sister, Chantal, start her own hair salon in order to have sustainable income. It will also go towards school uniforms and supplies through the village’s advocacy group,” she said.

Brynn Champney’s Rwanda journey does not end here. She plans to go back in January, hopefully as a student at the ULK, the Independent University in Kagali. “I hope to stay until November and live in the same village or another village of child-headed households as this is my main interest,” she said.

As the Leadership class, they continue to think globally and act locally. Recently in addition to the Rwanda fundraising efforts, they held a community blood drive.

*The **Rwandan Genocide** was the 1994 mass killing of hundreds of thousands of Rwanda’s Tutsis by Hutu militia. Over the course of approximately 100 days, from the assassination of Juvénal Habyarimana on April 6th through to mid July, at least 500,000 people were killed. Most estimates indicate a death toll between 800,000 and 1,000,000. ■

A Message From Former AFS Student (Class of 1980-81) *Looking To Reconnect With Friends*

My name is Allie Pizzorno. I spent one of the best years of my life at Victor Central Schools, as an AFS student in 1980-81.

I would love to get in touch with my school partners, teachers, and every one that remembers me, now that I have internet.

I was part of the swim team, UN Club and I’m full of beautiful memories of my time spent there.

Please, answer me... I’ll be anxiously expecting an answer, *María Alejandra Pizzorno Margalef*, Uruguay, South America — E-mail: bellviju@hotmail.com ■



Richard Amundson



Dawn Santiago-Marullo



Michael Wetherbee

Long-time VCS Teacher/ Administrator and an Alumnus are Finalists in VCS Superintendent Search

The Board of Education of the Victor Central School District continues the process of identifying a successor to Superintendent Tim McElheran who announced his retirement effective January 2009* after a long and highly successful service as the District's Superintendent. Currently, the Board is arranging for

interviews of three finalists: Richard Amundson from Lyons Central School, Dawn Santiago-Marullo from Victor Central School and Michael Wetherbee from Wayland-Cohocton Central School. All three candidates will visit the district for a series of interviews with staff, students, parents, and community members. The Board of Education plans to select the new superintendent by January 2009.

** Last month, The Board of Education asked Mr. McElheran to extend his service as Superintendent until March 27, 2009 to help navigate our schools through uncertain economic times. He agreed to assist in this endeavor. ■*

Academic, Athletic and Artistic Distinctions

- 86% of the class of 2008 challenged their abilities by taking at least one AP, IB or Project Lead the Way course.
- For the past three years, Newsweek Magazine ranked Victor High School in the top 1% of high performing high schools in the nation.
- For the fourth consecutive year, our District received recognition by the New York State Education Department as a "high performing" school district.
- In June, 96% of our students graduated with a Regents Diploma. Sixty-five percent earned a Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation and 32% received a Regents Diploma with Honors. To receive a Regents Diploma with Honors a student must have an average of 90% or higher on their Regents examinations.
- In 2007 our Victor Blue Devils marching band won the Small School Division 1 state championship at the Carrier Dome in Syracuse and our Indoor Drum Line won the Division 1 State championship.
- In May, The Varsity Choir, the High School Jazz and Wind Ensemble all placed first at the Darien Lake Music Festival. Each group also won "Grand Champion" for their respective divisions.
- Over the past four years our students have been part of 37 league and 14 Section V titles. This year, for the first time, they joined the Monroe County Athletic Division.

Matt Ryan

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more “well-known” schools like Syracuse or Ithaca, but you will not get any better hands on experience than going to the ‘Burgh. I have a tremendous network of friends and classmates all over the country who are at the top of their part of the television industry thanks to their schooling at Plattsburgh. **New York Now*” program can be seen in Victor on Sundays at 6:30pm on the Rochester PBS station WXXI-TV. ■

SAVE THE DATE

Sunday, June 14, 2009

For Information about the banquet
or about joining the alumni association,
call Ken Weigert at 585-924-2944

VICTOR CENTRAL SCHOOLS 114TH ALUMNI BANQUET



VCS Seeks Names of Distinguished Graduates

Do you know a Victor Central School alumnus who has made a significant contribution to society? The Graduates of Distinction program honors such individuals.

The program selection committee will have applications available February 1st. Alumni selected for this honor will be recognized at graduation in June.

Posthumous nominations will be accepted. Upon request, information on individuals making nominations will be kept confidential. Honorees must meet the following criteria to be considered: (1) a Victor Central School graduate of at least 15 years; (2) Post-graduation achievement that includes job-related achievements; professional honors and awards, professional affiliations, publications; (3) Civic or community involvement; (4) Educational achievements; (5) Other appropriate qualifications that merit consideration. **Nominations must be submitted by March 31, 2009.**

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