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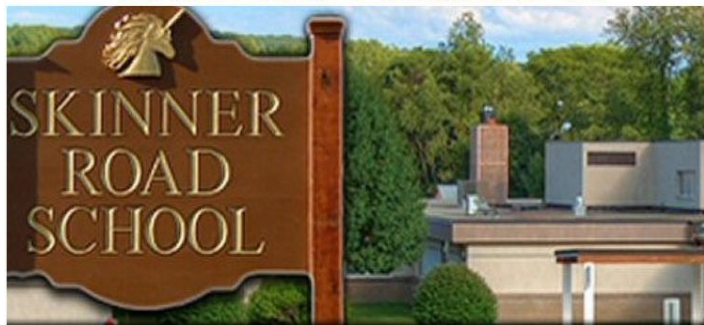
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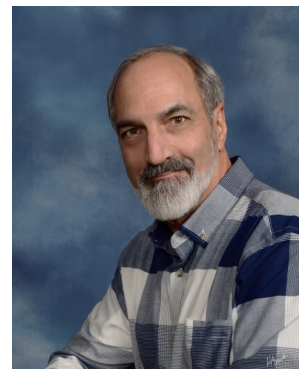
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Dear Friends, Neighbors and Students:

I hope everyone had a wonderful 2023 holiday season! We are excited to share with you in the pages that follow all the wonderful happenings in the Vernon Public Schools.

We are honored to have the **2024 Superintendent of the Year**, Dr. Joseph Macary, as the leader of our schools. And we are so proud of the faculty, staff, parents and students who have worked so hard to make our Vernon Public Schools great.

In the pages that follow, you will see outstanding student achievement at Rockville High School, especially among our creative writing students. The Class of 2023 produced many talented students who

have headed off to college with academic and athletic scholarships.

Our elementary and middle schools are among the best in the country and the programs provided are cutting edge with two nationally recognized Blue Ribbon Schools. Check out the story about the new Farm to Table program initiated this year.

Northeast School has a new Miracle Field, which was developed through a partnership with the Cal Ripken Foundation, the Miracle League Foundation, the Vernon Public Schools and the Town of Vernon. The Miracle Field was dedicated in September after a significant fundraising campaign that financed most of its construction. The dedication featured a sports clinic offered by the Cal Ripken Foundation and buddies from Rockville High

School athletic teams. Having this field in Vernon will open opportunities for the school and after school activities for children of all abilities.

Please take a moment and read about our spectacular schools and all they have to offer. Share the news with your friends!

Wishing you all a very happy and healthy 2024.



Daniel A. Champagne
Mayor, Town of Vernon





Vernon Public Schools Directory

Rockville High School

Jason Magao, Principal
Jason.Magao@vernonct.org
 70 Loveland Hill Road
 Vernon, CT 06066
Phone: 860-870-6050
 Full Day Schedule:
 7:30 AM - 2:00 PM
 Half-Day /Early Dismissal:
 7:30 AM -12:00 PM
 Delayed Opening:
 9:30 AM - 2:00 PM

Vernon Center Middle School

David Caruso, Principal
David.Caruso@vernonct.org
 777 Hartford Turnpike
 Vernon, CT 06066
Phone: 860-870-6070
 Full Day Schedule:
 7:45 AM - 2:15 PM
 Half-Day /Early Dismissal:
 7:45 AM -12:15 PM
 Delayed Opening:
 9:45 AM - 2:15 PM

Center Road School

Heather Earley, Principal
Heather.Earley@vernonct.org
 20 Center Road
 Vernon, CT 06066
Phone: 860-870-6300
 Full Day Schedule:
 8:15 AM - 2:45 PM
 Half-Day /Early Dismissal:

8:15 AM - 12:45 PM
 Delayed Opening:
 10:15 AM - 2:45 PM

Lake Street School

Terese (Tracy) Duenzl, Principal
Terese.Duenzl@vernonct.org
 201 Lake Street
 Vernon, CT 06066
Phone: 860-870-6085
 Full Day Schedule:
 8:15 AM - 2:45 PM
 Half-Day /Early Dismissal:
 8:15 AM - 12:45 PM
 Delayed Opening:
 10:15 AM - 2:45 PM

Maple Street School

Joshua Egan, Principal
Joshua.Egan@vernonct.org
 20 Maple Street
 Vernon, CT 06066
Phone: 860-870-6175
 Full Day Schedule:
 8:15 AM - 2:45 PM
 Half-Day /Early Dismissal:
 8:15 AM -12:45 PM
 Delayed Opening:
 10:15 AM - 2:45 PM

Northeast School
Brenda Greene, Principal
Brenda.Greene@vernonct.org
 69 East Street
 Vernon, CT 06066
Phone: 860-870-6080
 Full Day Schedule:
 8:45 AM - 3:15 PM
 Half-Day /Early Dismissal:
 8:45 AM - 1:15 PM
 Delayed Opening:
 10:45 AM - 3:15 PM

Skinner Road School
Bryan Kerachsky, Principal
Bryan.Kerachsky@vernonct.org
 90 Skinner Road
 Vernon, CT 06066
Phone: 860-870-6180

Full Day Schedule:
 8:45 AM - 3:15 PM
 Half-Day /Early Dismissal:
 8:45 AM - 1:15 PM
 Delayed Opening:
 10:45 AM - 3:15 PM

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Melissa Iles, Director
miles@vernon-ct.gov
 70 Loveland Hill Road
 Vernon, CT 06066
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Park Street Learning Center

Peter Lynch, Program Director, NEXT Step
Peter.Lynch@vernonct.org
 38 Park Street
 Vernon, CT 06066
Phone: 860-870-3703
 Monday through Friday,
 8:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Central Office

Joseph Macary, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools
jmacary@vernon-ct.gov
 30 Park Street
 Vernon, CT 06066
Phone: 860-896-4660
 Monday through Friday,
 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM



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TIX \$22-26

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Recommended for all ages.

MEET THE DINOSAURS ONSTAGE!

Hey kids! Get a photo with a dinosaur, and a chance to meet the cast at 1 pm before the show (additional fee per person required).

Sun, Mar 17, 2 pm

TIX \$22-26

GIRAFFE'S CAN'T DANCE

All the animals in the jungle know their own special dance, but Gerald the Giraffe can't seem to move without a clumsy step. But with the help of a wise cricket, he finds his own song, and dances to the beat of his own drum! In this stage adaptation of the beloved children's book, with puppets, African rhythm, and lots of dancing, Gerald learns that his differences are what make him special. Based on the bestselling picture book *Giraffe's Can't Dance*, this favorite children's musical with original songs will transport you and your family to Africa where you will meet a cast of characters guaranteed to make you laugh and think.

Recommended for age 3 – 8

*Note: all artists, events, dates, and programs are subject to change.
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Vernon Students Exceed State Average in English Language Arts, Math and Science

Vernon Public Schools students have beat the state average in the latest Connecticut Smarter Balanced Assessments, which were released Monday by the state Department of Education.

While school districts across the state continue to work to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, Vernon's focus on maximizing learning for all children is showing positive results.

"We are extremely pleased with the growth on the Smarter Balanced Assessment by our students in grades 3 through 8 in English Language Arts, Mathematics and Science," Vernon Superintendent Dr. Joseph P. Macary said. "The hard work and efforts of students, teachers, families, staff and administration have paid off. We are proud of the student results and their increased achievement. Next year, we will do even better."

In the 2023 Smarter Balanced results, Vernon students

- Outperformed the state average in all three test areas – English Language Arts, Mathematics and Science
- In Vernon's District Reference Group, Vernon students were No. 1 in English language arts and No. 2 in science.
- Of the 33 Connecticut Alliance Districts, Vernon

students' scores were No. 1 in both English language arts and math results.

"These results are even more impressive considering we were still coming out of the learning disruptions caused by the pandemic," Dr. Macary said. "We are making progress with student learning and moving the needle on student achievement."

Key to Vernon's progress is quality core instruction in every classroom, effective intervention that helps students who are below grade level in English language arts and math to catch up, and special education supports for kids with disabilities to help them overcome obstacles to achieve growth.

Test scores tell only part of a school or district's story. Student growth provides a more accurate measure of how schools contribute to student learning by demonstrating achievement over time. Students start each year with different levels of knowledge. Measuring growth shows how well a school is helping students learn.

"We have impressive growth considering we just went through a pandemic, but we're never satisfied," Dr. Macary. "We will never stop helping our kids keep moving forward. We know they can do it."

Submitted by:
Dr. Joseph Macary, Superintendent

www.VERNON-CT.gov

Vernon Students Sample Locally-Sourced Foods as Food and Nutrition Department expands Cafeteria Offerings

New Farm to School Coordinator introduces local, healthy good options

Since her arrival as the Vernon Public Schools Director of Food and Nutrition in August 2018, one of Elizabeth Fisher's goals has been to get locally-grown foods into school cafeteria meals. She made connections with local farmers through UConn's Extension's "Put Local on Your Tray" program and worked with cafeteria staff on healthy foods made from scratch using locally-sourced ingredients.

That ongoing effort took a giant leap forward this school year with the hiring of Kaylee Carlisle, the Vernon Public School's first Farm to School coordinator.

"Local foods are fresher, more flavorful and good for our students," Fisher said. "In

the process we can support local farmers. And now with Kaylee, we have someone who can solely focus on local foods."

The Food and Nutrition Department's goal is to ensure Vernon students have good nutrition so that they are ready to learn.

"Kids need food in their bellies to learn," Fisher said. "We want to make sure kids are ready to learn and that they succeed in school so they can become productive members of society."

Using locally sourced foods also presents opportunities to expand students' palates, and that is part of Carlisle's mission.

"We try to do some unusual foods," Fisher said. "We did radishes, something most kids had never tried. We just recently did kale and added it to strawberry-banana smoothies and the middle school kids loved it. We called them lucky green smoothies." (No trickery was involved. The kids knew they were eating kale.)

Other recent locally-sourced cafeteria offerings included tomato salad and broccoli and cheddar soup.

Carlisle's work is more than finding local foods for the cafeterias. She educates Vernon school children about healthy local foods and takes samples to schools for children to taste test during their lunch periods.

During a recent visit to Vernon Center Middle School, Carlisle was handing out samples of apple pie granola made with local apples and honey and lots of kids were eager to try it.

"I tell the students what I have and where the local product is from," Carlisle said. She then asks the students to give her feedback. At the middle school there were three ratings: love it, like it and I tried it. Most responses fell into the love it or like it category.

As Carlisle wheeled her cart

around the cafeteria, students eagerly reached out for samples. Several kids' eyes went wide with delight when they took a bite. One boy loved it so much he followed Carlisle around the cafeteria to get more apple pie granola.

"I love it," 7th grader Javon Wharton declared. "The honey and the granola, they're perfect. I want more."

The apple pie granola got rave reviews at each school Carlisle visited. Some students asked for recipe cards or for Carlisle to email their parents the recipe.

Carlisle has become known at the elementary schools and students are excited to see her.

"The kids are really enthusiastic and want to know what I have when I visit their school," she said. Elementary school students tend to be more adventurous in trying to new things, she said.

"I had one little girl ask me to come to her school every day," Carlisle said.

The goal is to get kids to try different foods. If they try something and decide they don't like it, that's OK. "Our message is that it is important to try new things," she said.

Submitted by: Dave Owens,
Communication Specialist



READ THEIR POETRY

Rockville High School Students Read Their Poetry At The Connecticut Literary Festival

Natalie Crowley, Grace Dehnel, Athena Lavigne, Lauren Tedford and Kim Yankson were selected to read their award-winning poetry at the Connecticut Literary Festival on Oct 15 at Real Art Ways. They shared the stage with an incredible line up of CT writers.



VERNON PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2023-2024 CALENDAR (BOE Approved 2/13/2023)

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
August/September 2023 (21 days)					February 2024 (18 days)				
28PD	29PD	30PD	31*	1				1	2
4	5	6	7	8	5	6	7	8	9
11	12	13	14	15	12	13	14	15	16
18	19	20	21	22	19	20	21	22	23
25	26	27	28CONF ES	29CONF ES	26	27	28	29	
October 2023 (21 days)					March 2024 (20 days)				
2	3	4	5	6					1
9	10	11	12	13	4	5	6T	7	8
16	17	18	19	20	11	12	13	14CONF ES	15CONF ES
23	24	25	26	27	18	19	20	21	22
30	31				25	26	27Q	28	29
November 2023 (19 days)					April 2024 (16 days)				
		1	2	3Q	1PD	2	3	4	5
6	7PD	8	9	10	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16CONF MS	17CONF MS	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22ED	23	24	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29T	30		29	30			
December 2023 (16 days)					May 2024 (22 days)				
			1				1	2	3
4	5	6	7 CONF ES	8 CONF ES	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22ED	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	27	28	29	30	31
January 2024 (21 days)					June 2024 (8 days)				
1	2	3	4	5	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	10	11	12ED/Q/T	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	17	18	19	20	21
22Q	23	24	25	26	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31							

PD = Professional Development Days - No School
ED = Early Dismissal - District Half Day of School

Q=End of Quarter T = End of Trimester

Holidays and School Vacations - No School
CONF = Parent/Teacher Conferences - Half-Day of School
 Elementary Schools / Middle School (as indicated ES / MS)

August 28th, 29th, 30th - District Professional Development
 *August 31st - First Day of School
 September 4th - Labor Day
 September 28 & 29 - Parent/Teacher Conferences - Elementary (Half Day)
 October 9th - Columbus Day/Indigenous Peoples Day
 November 7th - Professional Development Day - No School
 November 16 & 17 - Parent/Teacher Conferences - Middle School (Half Day)
 November 22nd - District Half Day of School - ED
 November 23rd & 24th - Thanksgiving Recess
 December 7 & 8 - Parent/Teacher Conferences - Elementary (Half Day)

December 22nd - District Half Day of School - ED
 December 25th - 29th - Holiday Recess
 January 1st - New Year's Day Holiday
 January 15th - Martin Luther King Day
 February 16th, 19th & 20th - Winter Recess and President's Day
 March 14 & 15 - Parent/Teacher Conferences - Elem. (Half Day)
 March 29th - Good Friday
 April 1st - Professional Development Day - No School
 April 8th - 12th - Spring Recess
 May 27th - Memorial Day
 June 12th - Last Day of School - District Half Day of School - ED

If school is cancelled 8 or more days, any make-ups beyond 8 will be taken from the April vacation beginning on April 8th working forward.

Signing Day took place at Rockville High School on May 18, 2023 where student athletes committed to playing a sport in college.

Below is a list of those students, the college they are attending and the sport they have committed to play:

Joey Christian	Worcester State University	Football
JT Dwire	Ursinus College	Football
Emily Fredrickson	University of New Haven	Cheerleading
Jordan Galica	University of New Haven	Soccer
Hason Green	Nichols College	Football
Lauren Haddad	Bryant University	Track and Field
Chloe Keane	Western New England University	Soccer
Ava Kristoff	Wheaton College	Track and Field
Weston LaBrecque	Marist College	Track and Field
Brooke Landry	St. Joseph University	Soccer
Malachi Mapp	Central Connecticut State University	Football
Tori Mitchell	Georgian Court University	Lacrosse
Lexi Real	Springfield College	Softball
Mandi Rivard	University of Hartford	Lacrosse
Arielle Shivers	Central Connecticut State University	Track & Field
Anaya Tolton	Westfield State University	Basketball
Cam Washington	Iona University	Track and Field
Luke Woodward	Salve Regina University	Soccer



SCIENCE LAB RENOVATIONS

ROCKVILLE HIGH SCHOOL SCIENCE LABS RENOVATED

Second floor laboratories at Rockville High School were renovated this summer to make them accessible to all students and to provide the equipment and layout necessary for inquiry-based learning practices.

The labs, which were original to the 65-year-old building, are now better suited to the requirements of the state's Next Generation Science Standards. Eight existing science classrooms were renovated into

new collaborative laboratory spaces that include three CLABS (combination laboratory/classroom), two laboratories and four classrooms. The renovations also brought the labs up to the latest building code requirements.

The project was 100 percent funded by the federal government.

"This is all about ensuring

our students at Rockville High School have access to up-to-date chemistry labs and that students have a first-class learning environment," said William Meier, Director of Business and Finance for the Vernon Public Schools. "These labs are going to serve Vernon students for generations to come."

Submitted by: Dave Owens,
Communication Specialist



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Shireen Rhoades of Maple Street School is Vernon's Teacher of the Year

VERNON, Conn. – Shireen Rhoades, a reading interventionist at Vernon's Maple Street School, has been selected as Vernon's Teacher of the Year. The announcement was made Thursday afternoon at Maple Street School.

Rhoades did not know she had received the honor. After sounding the alarm for the school's routine monthly fire drill, a stunned Rhoades stepped outside to join fellow teachers and students and was greeted by district officials and cheering students. In addition to her teaching duties, Rhoades, who has taught 28 years, is

chair of Maple Street's Family Engagement Committee. She will now be considered for state teacher of the year.

"Shireen Rhoades epitomizes what teachers are all about in Vernon, and what we want from our teachers," Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joseph P. Macary said.

In her role as a reading interventionist, Rhoades works closely with students who are struggling with reading and writing, and helps them improve and attain grade level standards.

"I know that children thrive when held to high standards

and clear expectations," she said of her work, adding that she believes every student can learn and that it is her job as a reading specialist to tailor each lesson to each student's specific need and to keep working with each student until the lesson breaks through. She motivates the students, especially the younger ones, with prizes as they achieve different milestones.

"I love my students and I love planning lessons that address their specific needs in ways that keep them positive and engaged," Rhoades said. She also works closely with students' classroom teachers to ensure that each student is getting the assistance they need to succeed.

She said she is honored to be selected as Vernon's teacher of the year.

"I am just overwhelmed," she said. "I love kids and I love teaching reading. I love doing the family engagement work. I'm very proud and I love this town."

Maple Street School Prin-

cipal Josh Egan said Rhoades' work with students and families is remarkable. "We have an amazing staff here at Maple Street School, but I can't think of a more deserving person to win this recognition," he said.

In her role as chair of the school's Family Engagement Committee, she has coordinated events such as career day and Read Across America Day to connect Maple Street School students to the wider community while also engaging Maple Street parents. Other events Rhoades and her team organized included Math and Literacy Night and the annual spelling bee.

During the pandemic, Rhoades and her Family Engagement Committee came up with creative solutions to keep families engaged, Egan said.

"She is all about students and putting students first," said Melissa Trantolo, Director of Elementary Teaching and Learning. "And she does so much for our families."

Submitted by: Dave Owens,
Communication Specialist



CREATIVE WRITERS DOMINATE

Rockville High School's Creative Writers Dominate ECSU's Creative Writing Competition



Congratulations to first place winner Elizabeth Johnson and third place winner Kim Yankson in the 2023 Eastern Connecticut State University Creative Writing Contest. Elizabeth will receive a \$200.00 prize for her poetry and Kim will receive a \$50.00 prize for her poetry. Brooklyn Bachand-Martin, Joey Gorski, Amelia Dykstra and Lauren

Tedford were named finalists for their outstanding entries. Additionally, Athena Lavigne, Evan Walter, Mihailee Constantopoulos, Grace Dehnel, Madison Bruce and Jules Quinzel received honorable mentions for their work. These students were honored at the ECSU Literary Festival on October 13.

Rockville High School Class of 2023 Graduates 182 Students

The Class of 2023 Graduation was held on June 14, 2023 at Rockville High School. There were 182 graduates who walked the stage to receive their diplomas.

Valedictorian Caitlin Chatterton and Salutatorian Isabel Cintron gave moving speeches to their teachers, classmates, family and friends.

Some members of the graduating class received scholarships totaling \$397,310. Graduates also saved a total of \$715,800 by earning college credits while at Rockville High School.

Some of the Colleges our 2023 Rockville High School Graduates will be attending include:

- Haverford College
- North Carolina State University
- University of Arizona
- Wheaton College
- Roanoke College
- Fairfield University
- Bentley College
- Quinnipiac University
- Savannah College of Art and Design
- University of Connecticut



LAKE STREET SCHOOL NEWS 2023

Vernon's Lake Street School Again Rated Among Connecticut's Best by U.S. News & World Report

For the second time in three years, U.S. News & World Report magazine has rated Vernon's Lake Street School as one of the best in Connecticut. Long known for rating colleges and hospitals, in 2021 U.S. News began ranking elementary and middle schools across the nation.

Lake Street School was 60th out of 560 schools in 2021 and for 2024 is ranked 54th of 545 Connecticut elementary schools.

The magazine's ratings are based on math and reading proficiency as measured by state assessments as well as how students perform compared to expectations. Lake Street students performed "well above expectations" in math and reading.

"A high-quality curriculum and teachers and administrators with high standards bring about these kinds of results," Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joseph P. Macary said. "None of this happens, however, without a strong partnership with families. Parents play an essential role in their children's education. When students, teachers, staff and parents are focused on



learning, the sky is the limit."

Lake Street School Principal Tracy Duenzl said she and her colleagues could not be happier to have achieved the ranking again. Like in all Vernon schools, students at Lake Street are engaged, challenged every day to do their best work, taught to think critically and collaboratively and to grow into life-long learners.

"At Lake Street School, we focus on doing what's best for kids by working together as a team," Duenzl said. "Our students and families are our top priority and are well supported by Vernon Public School. We work hard to help our students learn and grow."

It's been an exciting fall in the Vernon Public Schools. Lake Street School is only the latest school to be honored for its students' achievements.

Skinner Road School was named a National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education. And Northeast and Maple Street schools were designated as "Schools of Distinction" by the Connecticut Department of Education. And district-wide, Vernon Public Schools students beat the state average on the Next Generation Accountability Results and were ranked No. 1 among alliance districts and in Vernon's District Reference Group.

"In Vernon we have a strong

curriculum and teachers who are focused on helping students grow academically," Assistant Superintendent Robert Testa said. "If a student struggles, we have interventionists to help that student get back on track to meeting their full potential."

Board of Education Chairman Paul Grabowski said the performance of a community's public schools says a lot about a city or town.

"The Board of Education and Vernon community are immensely proud of the hard work our students, faculty, staff, and administrators have put in to earn this ranking," Grabowski said. "The strong performance of Vernon schools reflects our town's commitment to education, and the Board of Education's focus on creating an environment where high expectations and achievement are the norm. We know our teachers and administrators work hard to challenge Vernon students so that they are successful in school and life. The recognition by U.S. News & World is well deserved."

Submitted by: Dave Owens,
Communication Specialist

2023-2024 Vernon Public Schools Convocation



Left to Right: Dr. Joseph Macary, Superintendent, Anne Fischer, Board Chairman and Peter Borofsky, Teacher.

Teachers, staff and administrators kicked off the 2023-24 school year by welcoming 30 new teachers, honoring long-time staff, hearing from Vernon's Teacher of the Year, and be reminded by Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joseph P. Macary of the crucial role they play in students' lives.

"Create a relationship with every student," Dr. Macary told those assembled in the auditorium at Rockville High School. "They need you. They want structure. They want somebody to respect them, to listen to them."

Teachers are the lifeblood of the Vernon Public Schools and the relationships they build with students create the conditions for students to learn and to achieve, he said. The Board of Education, administrators and committees have created a curriculum that is right for Vernon students and established a strategic plan that guides the district forward.

Parents, family and community are essential elements in helping students be successful, Dr. Macary said. But it all comes back to teachers establishing positive relationships with students, he said.

"Once you have that positive relationship, things flow, things happen very, very quickly," Dr. Macary said.

Dr. Macary played a video recording of Rockville High School 2023 Salutatorian Isabel Cintron's address to her classmates. She described the impact teachers had on her and how she decided she wanted to become a teacher.

"In my junior year of high school my history teacher taught me how to make an origami crane," Cintron said.

"At first, I struggled to remember all of the folds, but with his guidance I was able to successfully produce a small paper crane. It wasn't perfect, but slowly

I was able to memorize each and every fold. One crane led to another, and each day a new pile of paper cranes would find their home on his desk."

The small seemingly inconsequential lesson had a tremendous impact on her, Cintron said.

"Education is a lot like a paper crane," she said. "Not everyone starts out as the same standard square, and some folds are more difficult than others and require a bit more patience and trial and error. Each teacher with their influence from preschool to graduation contributes to the final product, fold by fold."

She said that one day she hopes she is sitting at a graduation and a student thinks of her as someone who helped them grow.

"You never know what you will be given to work with, and you cannot see the final product that your investments will create, but with time and patience it will turn out to be something intricate and beautiful, like a paper crane," she said.

Cintron folded her speech into a paper crane and presented it to the teacher, seated in the audience at graduation, who had that profound impact on her, Paul Courtois.

He choked up Monday as he told his colleagues about that moment and how the paper crane is in a display box on his desk.

"It's going to be on my desk for the rest of my career," he said.

Vernon Teacher of the Year Shireen Rhoades, a reading interventionist at Maple Street

School, told her fellow teachers to turn to their colleagues when they need help. You are not alone, she told them. You are surrounded by colleagues who can and will help.

"There will be times this year when it feels like things are spiraling out of control," she said. "Students are acting up. Technology is on the fritz. Your perfect lesson is falling apart. Ask for help. Teaching is really hard. You are surrounded by kind, knowledgeable people who are happy to help you."

Anne Fischer, Board of Education chair when school opened, and Mayor Dan Champagne wished the teachers a successful school year and thanked them for their devotion to the Vernon Public Schools and their students.

Teachers have a hard job, Mayor Champagne said, and it seems to be getting harder each year. But it's an important job that has a deep impact on students and society.

"Have a great year and keep smiling," he said.

Fischer thanked teachers for their hard work educating Vernon's children and expressed hope they were rested and "abundantly energized" for the new year.

"Your commitment and dedication to achieving excellence and helping to mold our children does not go unnoticed," she said. "You are overwhelmingly appreciated by not only the board of ed, but also the entire Vernon community. You are a true gift to Vernon."

Submitted by: Dave Owens,
Communication Specialist

Vernon Superintendent Dr. Joseph P. Macary Named Connecticut Superintendent of the Year



service to the field of education.”

“The state now knows what we in Vernon have known for several years,” Vernon Mayor Dan Champagne said. “Dr. Macary is committed to creating an environment where Vernon children excel in school so that they are prepared to lead rewarding and successful lives. He works hard. He sets high standards. He solves problems. And, like a true leader, he does not ask anyone to work harder than he does to help our children succeed.”

Criteria for recognition as CAPSS Superintendent of the Year include: creativity in successfully meeting students’ needs, strong communications within the district and to the community, continual improvement of personal knowledge and skills while also providing professional development opportunities for others, and active participation in community activities and an understanding of regional, national and international issues.

Dr. Macary, who has said being a superintendent is the most challenging and rewarding position he has ever held, was honored Friday at the annual convention of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) and the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents.

“It is an honor to be recognized by my fellow superintendents,” Dr. Macary said. “Every

superintendent knows that a district’s success is due to many factors. Students, families, teachers, administrators, staff and the board of education create a environment where students can excel. Community support is essential too. We have all those in Vernon and we are seeing the results. We are proud of what we have achieved, but we will never stop trying to do better.”

Dr. Macary’s life is an example of the power of education. His parents came to the U.S. from Lebanon so that their children would have access to quality education. He attended UConn for his undergraduate and doctorate degrees and Quinnipiac University for his master’s degree. He began his educational career as a teacher in the Waterbury public schools. He was superintendent in Wolcott before coming to Vernon.

“During my time on the Board of Education, I saw Dr. Macary lay the ground work for the success our students are experiencing now,” former Board of Education Chairperson Anne Fischersaid. “Joe’s commitment to excellence and to Vernon children is inspiring.”

“Dr. Macary’s receipt of this award reinforces how fortunate Vernon is to have him,” current Board of Education Chairperson Paul Grabowski said. “The award reflects his accomplishments and dedication to providing students with a high quality education

both in Vernon and across Connecticut. It’s also reflective of the high standards he holds himself to, as well as students and teachers, to achieve academic success.”

“CAPSS is incredibly proud of Dr. Joe Macary’s selection as Superintendent of the Year,” CAPSS Executive Director Fran Rabnowitz said. “Joe is well known throughout the state for the outstanding academic growth and achievement he has attained in Vernon. He is a tireless advocate for students and staff in Alliance Districts and is very instrumental in preparing new educational leaders for our schools and districts.”

CABE Executive Director Patrice McCarthy said Dr. Macary is richly deserving of the honor for his “tireless work at the local and state levels on behalf of our public school students.”

Town Administrator Michael Purcaro, who previously worked for Dr. Macary as Director of Business and Finance for the Vernon Public Schools and was also Vice President of Government Relations for CABE, said Dr. Macary’s laser-like focus on continual improvement is making Vernon Public Schools and the Town of Vernon stronger.

“At the heart of every successful community is a well-managed and effective school system, where students are prepared academically and socially to analyze problems, engineer solutions, build practical skills, and to approach life’s challenges with confidence,” Purcaro said. “Strong public schools are the foundation upon which strong communities are built. I am proud of Joe’s accomplishments and grateful for his leadership and commitment to the Vernon community.”

Submitted by: Dave Owens,
Communication Specialist

Vernon Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joseph P. Macary has been named 2024 Connecticut Superintendent of the Year by the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS).

Dr. Macary, who has been Vernon’s superintendent since October 2015, has focused on working closely with parents, teachers, staff, the Board of Education and town leaders to improve Vernon Public Schools and steadily increase student performance in measurable ways. That work has shown results.

This fall Vernon residents learned that Vernon Public Schools exceeded the state average in 18 of 23 metrics in the state’s Next Generation Accountability Results. Vernon was also No. 1 among Alliance Districts and in its District Reference Group.

Two elementary schools, Maple Street and Northeast, recently achieved “School of Distinction” status while a third, Skinner Road School, was named a “National Blue Ribbon School” for its performance. Only four Connecticut schools achieved Blue Ribbon status this year. In 2020, Northeast was also named a Blue Ribbon School.

In selecting Dr. Macary as superintendent of the year, CAPSS cited his “remarkable achievements, dedication and exemplary



Dr. Joseph Macary with students from Rockville High School.

U.S. Department of Education Names Vernon's Skinner Road School a National Blue Ribbon School

For the second time in five years, a Vernon elementary school was honored by the U.S. Department of Education as a National Blue Ribbon School.

Skinner Road School was recognized for the hard work of its students, teachers, administrators and families to close the achievement gap. In 2020 Vernon's Northeast School was designated a National Blue Ribbon School.

"I could not be more proud of our schools, our teachers and the students at Skinner Road School who have demonstrated that with hard work and commitment, great things can be achieved," Vernon Mayor Dan

Champagne said. "This national recognition is a tremendous honor for our students and for our community."

The annual awards program recognizes schools for their overall academic excellence or their progress in closing the achievement gap.

"This is like winning an Olympic gold medal," Vernon Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joseph P. Macary said. "We are only one of four schools in Connecticut being recognized for our achievements. I am very proud of the students, teachers, families, staff and administration at Skinner Road School. They have been working diligently over

the last seven years to close the achievement gap and this is a testament to their efforts."

Skinner Road School serves 321 students in pre-kindergarten through grade 5. More than 60 percent of its students are designated with high needs. It is one of five elementary schools in Vernon, which is an Alliance District. The school's accountability index in 2021-22 was 82.8, its highest ever. Since 2016-17, Skinner Road School has been identified annually as a School of Distinction. Skinner Road School Principal Bryan Kerachsky said he is proud and humbled by his school's achievement.

"The teachers and staff of Skinner Road School are committed to making sure each student gets what they need to become well-rounded, responsible citizens of our community," Kerachsky said. "As the principal of Skinner Road School, I am so proud of our entire school community. Everyone has worked so hard to build relationships with families and to provide a school experience where all students can succeed. To be recognized as a National Blue Ribbon

School is extremely humbling. But we are not done. We will continue to work hard, if not harder, for all of our students and families."

A twice-a-day focus on mathematics at Skinner Road School resulted in students showing particularly strong growth in mathematics. Students with high needs, on average, met 92.7 percent of their mathematics growth targets.

"Our goal is for every student to achieve or exceed yearly expected progress," Dr. Macary said. "We are indeed moving the needle on student achievement."

Student growth provides a more accurate measure of how schools contribute to student learning by demonstrating achievement over time. "This remarkable achievement by our students is due to the hard work and dedication of our teachers, administrators and staff and the leadership of Dr. Macary and his central office team," Town Administrator Michael Purcaro said.

Submitted by: Dave Owens,
Communication Specialist



MEMBERS OF THE ROCKVILLE FOOTBALL TEAM VISITED THE 9/11 MEMORIAL

Members of the Rockville football team visited the 9/11 Memorial & Museum on Sept. 11, 2023 to honor 1974 Rockville High School graduate and former football player Frank Macri, who went on to become a member of the New York Police Department. Macri was among the first responders to the Twin Towers

at the World Trade Center. He worked about 350 hours, first at Ground Zero through Oct. 1, and then at Fresh Kills landfill from Nov. 1 through January of 2002. Seven months later, he was diagnosed with an aggressive form of lung cancer and died on Sept. 2, 2007 at the age of 52.



Photo Courtesy of Erick Knickerbocker

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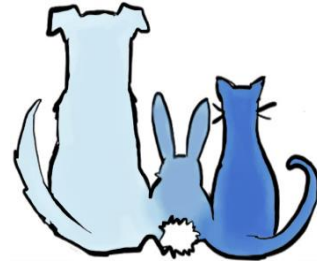
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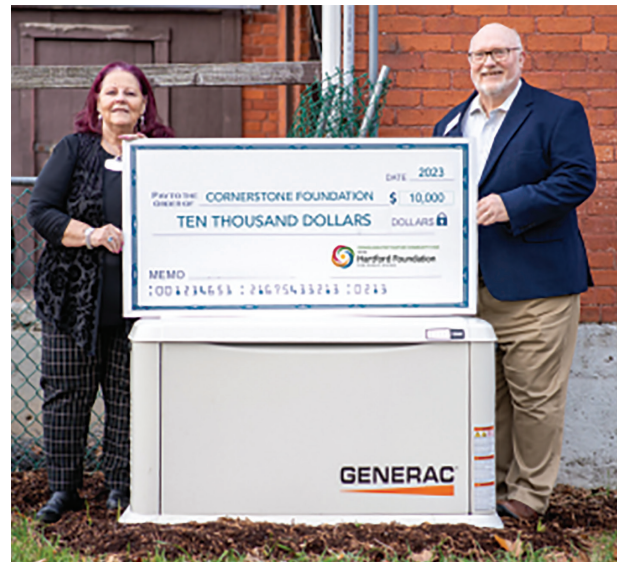
Grants Available for Vernon Nonprofits

The Vernon Greater Together Community Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is seeking grant proposals for an upcoming grant cycle. Grant applications will be open starting January 30th, 2024 to nonprofit organizations (of all sizes) serving Vernon residents. Applications will be accepted until March 1st, 2024.

In 2023, \$43,500 dollars was awarded to nine organizations. This money went directly to projects impacting residents of Vernon.

The Cornerstone Foundation (pictured) received funds to install a new generator to serve their community kitchen in the event of a power failure.

For more information on all 2023 grants, as well as upcoming information on how to apply for 2024, visit hfpg.org/vernoncf.



Cornerstone Executive Director Sharon Redfern and Board President, Tom Stauffer pose with a check for \$10,000 which was used to purchase a generator.

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Vernon Celebrates Opening of Miracle League Field at Northeast School



Steve and Laurel Leibowitz and Dr. Joseph Macary

The Town of Vernon, the Vernon Public Schools, the Cal Ripken Sr. Foundation and the Miracle League of Northern Connecticut celebrated the opening of the Miracle League Field at Northeast School on Sept. 20.

The field was constructed over the summer and was the culmination of a year of work by Vernon officials and fundraising by the Miracle League Board of Directors.

The ballpark is designed for use by children with special needs and mobility issues. Its goal is to give all children the opportunity to enjoy sports. It has a wheelchair-accessible dugout, a

custom-made rubberized turf to prevent injuries and barrier-free accessibility for athletes who are visually impaired. During play, each athlete has a buddy who assists them.

"I am so proud of how our community came together to create something truly special for children from Vernon and all through Connecticut," Vernon Mayor Dan Champagne said. "This field is a place where every child is welcome and can experience the thrill of running the bases, chasing a soccer ball or tossing a lacrosse ball. This field represents the good that government can achieve with community support."

Vernon Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Joseph P. Macary said that when he was approached about the idea of bringing the field to Vernon and Northeast School, it was an easy decision.

"Other towns talk about DEI – diversity, equity, and inclusion," Macary said. "Well, in Vernon, we don't talk about it, we do it. On this field all students can come together to play and bond as teammates in baseball, soccer and lacrosse. It's going to allow students with special needs to be able to participate with everyone else. Literally, it will level the playing field."

Steve and Laurel Leibowitz led the effort to build the field and raise the necessary funds. They obtained financial support and donated services from tradespeople who shared their vision. They also lined up essential support from the Cal Ripken Sr. Foundation.

"This was a true collaboration between the Town of Vernon, the Vernon Public Schools, the Miracle League of Northern Connecticut and the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation," said Chuck Brady, senior vice president of the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation. "It shows that when good people get together for a good cause, we can get things done."

Mayor Champagne, Dr. Macary and Town Administrator Michael Purcaro were enthusiastic about the proposal from the

Miracle League of Northern Connecticut and worked hard to develop a plan. The Town Council and Board of Education each unanimously endorsed the project.

"We spent years searching for a place to build a field like this and I am just delighted that Mayor Champagne and Dr. Macary embraced our vision for creating a field that is truly for all children," Steve Leibowitz said. "Every child deserves a chance to participate in and experience sports. We have achieved something very special here in Vernon."

There are about 300 Miracle Fields across the U.S. and two others in Connecticut, in West Hartford and East Lyme. Northeast School was selected for the Miracle Field because it has extensive field space and its strategic location close to I-84.

Town Administrator Michael J. Purcaro said town staff from multiple departments enthusiastically came together to make the project happen.

"Children and families from all over Connecticut are going to visit Vernon to play at the Miracle Field," Purcaro said. "Those families will get to know what many of us already know – that Vernon is a welcoming community and a great place to live, work and play."

Submitted by: Dave Owens,
Communication Specialist



Sinclair Works to Rebuild Rockville High School Bands

Since his arrival in the summer of 2022, Raymond J. Sinclair II, the Director of Bands at Rockville High School and head of the Grade 6-12 Music Department, has been working to rebuild and transform the RHS Band Program.

Sinclair's priorities are focused on building the RHS concert band, jazz band and marching band by giving students an opportunity to love and better appreciate their craft. In addition to the music program, Sinclair has taken over the directorial role of the RHS spring musicals and last spring put on four successful performances of "The Wizard of Oz." Later this winter, on March 1-3, the RHS Musical Theater Company will perform the contemporary musical "Mamma Mia," which features the music of the wildly popular musical group ABBA.

Sinclair's tireless passion for music education and the success of his students, past and present, stems from his experiences in high school with the Norwich Free Academy band. Sinclair attended the University of Connecticut, participated in

the UConn Marching Band and traveled the country with the UConn pep band. In addition to his educational experiences, Sinclair marched and performed with the award winning Boston Crusaders Drum Corps and the Hawthorne Caballeros Drum and Bugle Corps of Hawthorne N.J. These experiences gave Sinclair the drive to pursue excellence with the music and drama students at Rockville High School.

"It's great to be able to do what I'm passionate about," Sinclair said. "The most important part of my job is placing students first." Music is a crucial part of any education and is a key element of a student's emotional and social health. Students involved in the arts throughout their education have been shown statistically to perform better on standardized tests as well as to have higher attendance and graduation rates, Sinclair said.

Sinclair has taken the RHS Marching Band program from 15 students when he arrived to 42 this fall with projections to meet or exceed 65 students

next fall. A large part of the current success of the RHS band program comes from the tireless work of the new band director at Vernon Center Middle School, Jesse Clemens. Ms. Clemens has created excitement amongst the students that has resulted in more than 70 students in the sixth grade band and higher retention rates in the seventh and eighth grade bands.

The successes of the RHS Band and Marching Band last fall have not come without struggles. The rainy summer and fall limited the Rockville High School Band's ability to attend and perform at football games and band competitions.

"This has been the toughest season I've ever experienced because of the rain every Saturday," Sinclair said. "Many of the shows were canceled and the kids didn't have as many opportunities to perform."

To give the students a chance to perform and prepare for state and national championships, the RHS Marching Band hosted an open rehearsal and community night in October.

The overwhelming support from the community gave the band great momentum heading into its last weeks of rehearsals. The RHS Marching RAM Band concluded its season by earning its highest placement and score in more than 10 years as Connecticut State Runners-Up and a fifth place finish at the USBANDS group 2a National Championships in Allentown, Pa.

This spring, the RHS Band and Jazz Band will travel to Jackson, N.J. to compete in the Music in the Parks festival. Next fall, the RHS Marching RAM Band will debut its original competition show titled "Which, Witch is Which," and will make the competitive jump to the USBANDS group 3 open class level. The jump from A class to open class culminates with Connecticut State Championships at Memorial Stadium in New Britain and National Championships at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J. The fall of 2024 will feature the return of wildly popular "Festival of Bands" marching band competition at Rockville High School.

Rockville High School athletes do more than compete on the field

The success of the Rockville High School football team generated a lot of attention this fall, but there were many other students competing. Sports is only part of what it means to be an RHS athlete.

Athletes participate in a variety of community service activities. The football team greeted and read to students at Center Road School, and athletes carried out food drives, connected with their colleagues involved in Unified Sports and mentored middle school and youth sports athletes. RHS teams also played a large role in the grand opening of Vernon's new Miracle League Field.

"We appreciate the support of our students, staff, and community this fall season," Rockville High School Athletic Director Jeffrey Farrell said. "Our student athletes and coaches work tirelessly all season as we strive to improve both as athletes and as people. Thank you to all who have supported."

Farrell said he is especially proud of athletes' performance in the classroom and beyond. "When they participate their grades go up and they get involved in the community," he said. During the fall season, 257 RHS students participated in athletics and earned a B+ average in their classes, Farrell said.

There are student athletes at Vernon Center Middle School too. In soccer, 20



girls and 23 boys competed. The girls finished with a record of five wins, two losses and one tie, also advanced to the finals in the conference tournament.

The boys were 7-1 and finished No. 1 in the conference, but lost in the conference tournament.

In cross country, the girls finished second in their conference and the boys sixth. Farrell said the boys won their conference the last three years and the girls the past two years. This year's runners are young and primed to get faster. Thirty four boys and girls ran cross country this fall.

In Unified Sports, there were 20 athletes and mentors who participated in the Miracle Field opening, cornhole and bowling tournaments and hosted a dance.

Girls soccer had 35 athletes and finished with a record of 6-9-1. The team qualified for the state tournament and two members received all-conference athlete honors.

There were 29 boys on the soccer team, which had a record of 6-9-1 and also qualified for the state tournament. Two members received all-conference honors.

Thirty eight girls participated in volleyball and finished the season with a 15-5 record. The team also qualified for the conference and state tournaments and won in the first round of both. There were two all-conference athletes and one all-state. The team also raised more than \$500 for breast cancer patients during their "pink game."

Rockville High does not have a pool, but it has eight swimmers who competed with the Manchester High School team. Four swimmers participated in the state meet and two qualified for the state open. The team finished fourth at the state open and 1 swimmer was an all-state athlete.

Two RHS athletes participated in field hockey as a coop team with Somers High School. Both athletes are planning to continue playing in college.

In cross country, 20 boys and 11 girls participated. The girls finished fourth in the conference and the boys third. There were two all-conference runners and one all-state.

A team that continues to gain popularity is E-sports. Fourteen RHS students participated and had teams in League of Legends, Super Smash Bros, and Rocket League. All teams qualified for the playoffs.

Twenty students participated in cheerleading and attend home and away football games. The team is also preparing for competitions.

There were 70 students on the football team, which finished with a regular season record of 9-1, qualified for the state tournament for the fifth consecutive season, advanced to the semi-finals for the four straight season and to the state finals for the second time in three years. Eight team members earned all-conference honors, and two players were all-state.

"We are very proud of our football team and their run to the state championship game this fall," Farrell said. "Although we did not get the result we wanted, we are proud of the way the team played and conducted themselves until the last play. The athletes and coaches have a lot to be proud of."

Submitted by: Dave Owens,
Communication Specialist



The Vernon Parks and Recreation Department

is proud to be able to provide a variety of safe, accessible, physically attractive and enjoyable leisure time facilities and activities for Vernon residents of all ages. You are invited to enrich your recreational opportunities through participation in the Vernon Parks and Recreation Department. Full department information can be found online at www.vernonrec.org

FALL HIGHLIGHTS

We had a wonderful fall and start to the school year! The Trails are filled with people enjoying the beautiful scenery and weather. Many are enjoying our programs such as the REK After School Program which serves students in all 5 elementary schools, over 24 Dance Classes for those ages 3 and up, Babysitter Training classes, Basketball, Adult Volleyball, Pickleball, Bus Trips and much more! Festive lights illuminated Henry Park through December to bring the holiday cheer to all! We thank you for enjoying our offerings and being a wonderful community!

SCHOOL YEAR PROGRAMS

Recreation and Education for Kids (R.E.K.) is for students K-5 at each of the elementary schools in Vernon from the end of the school day to 6:00 pm. We strive to provide a variety of fun, engaging indoor and outdoor activities to help kids learn, make friends, and have fun after school. Daily Activities include: Homework time, snack, sports & group games, arts & crafts, table activities and special events. Full details and information are available online.

April Vacation Camp will be held April 8th through 12th at Center 375. Register for a week of group games, theme days, playground time and more! Available to students K-5th grade. Check online to see upcoming offerings.



Beyond Dance Program - Miss Jess of Beyond Dance is offering a variety of dance classes for youth and adults this spring. The dance classes this session will culminate in a Spring Showcase performance in May. Class offerings include: Ballet, Tap, Jazz, Hip Hop, Acrobatics, Contemporary, and Musical Theater. Visit us online for the full schedule and class offerings! All classes must meet minimum enrollment thresholds to run.

WINTER

ART-ventures for kids in grades K-5. Come explore original art forms and techniques while sculpting colorful monsters, designing ceramic robots, decorating birdhouses and more. Of



course, there will be stories which relate to the works of art. Program is held on Wednesdays from 5-6pm at Center 375 beginning January 24.

Pee Wee Indoor Track is for boys and girls ages 3-5 to learn the fundamentals of track running indoors. Let your children release that bundle of energy and have fun learning the sport behind running. Program will meet on Wednesdays at Center 375 Gym starting January 17.

Babysitter Training Course for Kids ages 11-15 on Saturday March 23. Learn the best ways to keep children safe, including how to manage real-life situations, diapering, feeding and much more.

Over the Hill Basketball (Ages 35+) is an open gym basketball program held on Friday nights 7-9pm at Vernon Center Middle School for Vernon residents. Pre-registration for each session

is recommended. Session 1 is in session with drop-ins welcome. Session 2 begins on February 9 and accepting full session registrations.

Snowperson/Sculpture Contest is coming soon! Keep an eye out for details on the Parks & Rec website and Facebook in January. Entries will be accepted through February and winners announced in March!

SPRING

Pee Wee Track Get your little ones up and moving with this high-energy program led by Miss Pat. Participants ages 3-6 will learn the fundamentals of the

gravity and centripetal force, tension and compression along with experiments. Program is held on Wednesdays 5:30-6:30pm at Center 375 beginning April 17.

Track Club is for boys and girls 6-14 years old. This is an eight-week instructional program starting in April. Participants meet once per week at Rockville High School Track. Participants will have the ability to experience a variety of track and field events.

Community Gardens registration opens in February for returning gardeners. Please check your emails for details. New gardeners can visit www.vernonrec.org starting March 4th to reserve a plot for the season.

Egg Hunt will be held on Thursday, March 28 for Vernon children ages 2-8 years old. Bring a container and hunt for the plastic candy filled eggs on the ball fields. Pre-registration is NOT required. Event is free. Full details and times available online.

Fishing Derby will be held on Saturday April 13th 8:00-10:00am at Valley Falls Pond. Remember to pre-register. Awards are provided for the top three in each division and the overall heaviest fish. Open to children age 15 and under. Come fish when the odds are stocked in your favor.

Mother's Day Dash 5K in Henry Park will be held on Sunday, May 12th. This is a USATF Certified 5K course and averages over 250 participants. The start and finish line are in Henry Park. The Mother's Day Dash offers 16 different divisions and a special Mother/

Daughter & Mother/Son division. Proceeds from the race benefit the Vernon Police Explorers and Send-A-Kid Scholarship Fund. Pre-registration is available online. There is limited space for day of registration. Check-in begins at 8:00am. Awards provided for each division. Free T-shirts for anyone pre-registered by date TBD. Every pre-registered runner will receive one ticket for the raffle, additional tickets available for purchase on site. This event is made possible by support for our generous sponsors as well as the Vernon Police, Fire and Ambulance services.

Summer Camp Information Coming Soon! Camp information will be out in February. Start thinking of the sunny summer days and all the fun your children can have at Vernon Parks and Recreation summer camps!



sport of Track while playing fun games and enjoying time being active outdoors. Program details will be available online in the Spring.

Mad Science for kids in grades K-5. Students will explore inertia,



RENTALS

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