



Empowering Youth
Strengthening Families
Building Community

LARAWAY

YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES



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Executive Director



June 2011

Goodbye....and Hello!

After providing over 30 years of education and therapeutic supports at our 95 School Street location, it's time for goodbye as we move to our new home.

We'll carry with us many fond memories of youths learning and forming connections with the world around them. Thank you to donors, staff, foster parents, Board members, community partners, and the kids and families who share in our journey.

Our new home allows all programs —Laraway School, Substitute Care and Backpack— to be housed on one, comprehensive campus.

With construction slated for completion in June, staff and kids excitedly prepare for the move.

Please note our contact information for all departments as of July 1st:

Laraway Youth & Family Services
P.O. Box 621
275 VT Rte. 15 West
Johnson, VT 05656
Phone (802) 635-2805
www.Laraway.org

I invite you to our **Grand Opening and Harvest Celebration, Thursday, September 15.** Watch for details!

See you down at the farm!

Greg Stefanski, Executive Director
(802) 635-2805 x 201
GregS@Laraway.org

P.S. We've only \$84,000 left to raise to meet our **Capital Campaign** goal!

Moment in Time: Student selected as MVP

Laraway School students partner with the **Johnson State College Men's Basketball Team** for a program called **Shooting for Goals.**

We are grateful to **JSC Coach Mike Osborne** for encouraging his players to spend time teaching our kids the finer points of the game while also engaging them in healthy play. These

students serve as powerful role models.

At a recent end of season event, **Shane**, a Laraway student, was designated as **Most Valuable Player.** He was selected for his hard work, dedication and overall commitment to fair play on the basketball court. Congratulations!

Prom: A rite of spring

Anastasia* likes to read novels and write in her journal. She plans a career in the field of culinary arts. As a teen in our foster care program, she attended prom with a little bit of help from a Laraway staffer.

“My dress was white with blue trim and I wore silver sandals that strapped around my ankles,” **Anastasia** remembers.

Laraway staff member **Jessica Krauss** helped her with make-up and fashioned a hairstyle, showcasing her pretty blond locks. **Jessica** arrived with a special gift for the first-time prom-attendee: handmade earrings and a necklace to match her dress.

Anastasia was like Cinderella, transformed for the ball, when her date arrived to pick her up. She looked lovely. She was lovely. She was a Vermont teen heading to prom for an evening of elegance and music, dancing and socializing—just as it should be! ***Name Changed**

Help us grow our gardens!

As we work with youths in our programs to plan gardens for our new site, we seek the following donations:

plants, seeds, tools, materials and any other gardening or agricultural supplies

For more information, please contact **Cornelius Murphy Farm Steward** at **(802) 730-7052** CorneliusM@Laraway.org



Thank you to our supporters!

Individuals

- Anonymous
- Charles & Linda Berry
- Jodi Blaisdell
- Susan & Jeff Bond
- Elizabeth Burroughs
- Lisa Burt-Parkhurst
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- Rhonda Stuart

- Senator Rich Westman
- Sue Wisheart & Howard Duchacek
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Businesses / Organizations

- Donald P. Blake, Jr., Inc.
- Cambridge Area Rotary Club
- Cheney, Brock & Saudek
- Community National Bank
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- Scheerer Family Foundation
- S.C.O.R.E.
- Spruce Peak Performing Arts Center
- Stowe Mt. Resort
- Stowe Tree Experts
- Susanna's Catering
- Washington County Mental Health

In Memory of

- Mick Heller

If your name was inadvertently omitted, please contact Katherine Stamper at (802) 635-2805 x 205

Laraway Youth Present at VFAPA Statewide Conference

"Foster youth answering questions about their experiences was priceless. This should be part of foster parent training."

Workshop Participant

Speaking up, reasoning and thinking on one's feet are vital elements of self-advocacy. Four talented youths in Laraway's foster care program took their show on the road to teach others about the transformative power of theatrical improvisation and storytelling.

Bridgette, Carissa, Chantal and Nikki co-facilitate a workshop entitled "*Finding Our Voices: It's About Improvisation*" at the 2011 VT Foster and Adoptive Family Association Conference in Burlington.

The teens, part of a Laraway afterschool activity which received seed money from the **Morrisville Rotary Club**, have been meeting monthly since the fall, dabbling in theater, literature and personal storytelling.

Research shows that theater teaches us to speak with increased confidence, gain comfort in social settings, refine brainstorming ability and enhance creative thinking. Theater also sharpens listening and comprehension skills.

Sharing personal stories enhances self-esteem while reducing feelings of isolation. As one of the girls proclaimed, "*MY story matters*" and yet another offered, "*YOU have a story, too.*"

The youths launched into a flurry of theater games, eliciting enthusiastic audience

participation. Rousing games of "*Taxi*", "*What are you doing?*" and "*Isolation Booth*" evoked smiles, laughter and plenty of movement from the 30+ workshop participants.

The workshop concluded with a skit, inspired by real life experiences of Laraway kids, performed with gentleness and empathy by audience members. The skit provided an appropriate lead-in for the teens to form a panel, fielding questions from the audience.

As youths within Vermont's foster care system, they were the "experts" in the room, answering questions with calm clarity. They spoke to real challenges youth in foster care encounter.

We hope these young, talented presenters are able to carry forward in their lives the ability to stand tall and proud, speaking their minds with passion and conviction.

Conference participation is just one way to help our youths find their place on the stage we call life.

A workshop participant said it best: "*Excellent! Fun, authentic communication—very rewarding. I have great admiration for the girls for putting themselves out and giving us insights! Thank you! Definitely, this should happen again.*"



You're Invited!
Laraway's 35th Graduation
Wednesday, June 15, 2011
10:30 a.m.
at the Farm

RSVP: KatherineS@Laraway.org



LARAWAY
YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES

P.O. Box 621
275 VT Rte. 15 West
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www.Laraway.org

MISSION

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

Student Interns: Informing and enhancing our work

Laraway is fortunate to have hosted three interns from **Johnson State College** during the 2010-11 academic year.

Kayla Golfin and **Cherise Boutin** interned as mentors in Laraway's foster care program. By spending one-on-one time with youth, they helped with academics and engaged youth in

healthy recreation, fostering development of crucial pro-social skills.

Hayes Johnson, a skilled graphic arts student, helped Laraway redesign marketing materials. Thank you to all!

Interested in a possible internship? Contact **Rhonda Stuart**, Human Resources Manager at (802) 635-2805 x 204.

Laraway goes GREEN!

Prefer to receive this newsletter via email?

Email: KatherineS@laraway.org

Type GO GREEN in the subject line.
We'll take care of it. Thanks!

Laraway is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to identifying and building on the strengths of children and youth with emotional, behavioral and mental health challenges, through alternative education and therapeutic foster care.

