

# LARAWAY YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES

## LARAWAY...

## IT'S ABOUT THE KIDS



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Summer 2010

*Children thrive in a nurturing environment*

### Invitation to Summer

Fire ring? Snowshoe trails? Horses? Biodome? Fly fishing? Fresh produce processing center? These are just a few of the answers we have received to the question, "What can you do with 35 acres of farmland?"

As Laraway prepares to transition to our new home, we have brainstormed many great ideas for making the most of the farmland and river access the site affords us.

Do you have a creative idea for how we might use our newly-acquired land while delivering essential services to kids and families? Give us a shout or stop by. We'd love to hear from you.

Stay tuned for a construction kick-off announcement. Laraway's barn renovation project is close to being put out to bid and our fundraising efforts continue. Please feel free to contact us for more

information!

In the meantime, please read further to catch samplings of our kids' art and writing. You'll also learn about a horse therapy initiative and meet former and current staff.

We invite you to attend Laraway's **Graduation and Student Recognition Celebration on Tuesday, June 15**. Come join us for speakers, reflections on the school year, and a delicious lunch. Please see RSVP information on page 2.

Finally, I wish you a wonderful start to summer!

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

### Words from our youth: Everybody has a dream

Getting good grades is a very good thing for me to have because I want to go to college. With bad grades, I am not going to get where I want to. Good grades to me are A's and B's and I am so happy with myself, unlike before.

When I get lower than a B- I make sure that I bring that up. I used to get C's and D's, but to be honest, that was when I did not care about anything. I was going

downhill and I thought that I had no hope for myself. But I am so glad that I turned that around.

Also, I think about college and I want to be the first one in my family to get to college and succeed. *C.M.*



Art by Anthony

## Betsy Burroughs: "He wanted to learn to read so badly"

**Betsy Burroughs** taught math and served as assistant school director at Laraway from 1977 to 1988. She also helped chaperone numerous hiking and camping trips.

Reflecting on working with the kids Betsy said, "I respected some of them a great deal because of the struggles they had. For some it was hard to

overcome the effect of their home life situation. Working at Laraway broadened Betsy's perspective on students' abilities and learning styles.

"There was one student—he wanted to learn to read so badly and he'd try so hard. To see dedicated kids work so hard to learn skills that

came so easily to others was powerful."



**Laraway School's Graduation and Student Recognition will be held on Tuesday, June 15th 10:30 a.m.**

**Community members are invited.**

**Please RSVP to Katherine at 635-2805 x 205**

**Lunch provided**

### Community Thank You's

Lintilhac Foundation

Boyden Farms



Mill Foundation

Boyden Winery

Chittenden/People's United Community Foundation



Stowe High School SHAPE Club

Cheney, Brock & Saudek



High Mowing Seeds

Menard's Agway

Anonymous

Parker & Stearns

Craftsbury Outdoor Center

Pat & Rich Albrecht

Shelburne Farms

Smugglers' Notch Resort

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Vermont Dept. of Labor Summer Youth Employment Program

*We appreciate our supporters. If, for some reason, your name was omitted, please contact Katherine Stamper at (802) 635-2805 x 205 KatherineS@Laraway.org*



## Kids being kids...with help from horses

“I see kids allowing themselves to open up and take a risk to make a connection. I see kids being kids,”

Laraway psychologist Matt Sadowsky

Several youths in Laraway’s therapeutic foster care program spent time with horses at the **Center for America’s First Horse** in Johnson, a farm owned by **Stephanie Lockhart**. The opportunity surfaced when **Matt Sadowsky** was looking for creative therapeutic activities designed to support kids who’ve experienced trauma. Horses seemed a safe bet for capturing teenagers’ interest.

“A lot of our kids have learned to respond to relationships with defiance,” Sadowsky said. “That doesn’t work with a horse, especially a big horse. These kids learned to approach their animals in different ways. There was no riding initially. It was simply about being together, learning to be with each other.”

“My horse was named Oscar,” **Elizabeth\***, a bright-eyed 15-year-old mused. “He was one of the running horses in the movie *Hidalgo*. When it was time to choose people, Oscar chose me---he rested his head on my shoulder.”

Lockhart allowed the teens time to observe the horses. She pointed out that horses are vastly intuitive creatures. They know who to choose to be their partner. By choosing Elizabeth, Oscar---a white and brown-spotted gelding---was saying he felt an affinity, a connection to her. That affinity would grow as Elizabeth learned to groom, lead, communicate with and eventually ride Oscar.

“Oscar kind of knew he was a star,” Laraway staff member **Jessica Krauss** noted. “He walked with a little bit of a swagger. It’s as if he expects people

to pay attention to him. He’s also the most outgoing horse on the farm, kind of like Elizabeth is among the kids.”

Animal-assisted therapy involves partnering a person with an animal---often times a dog, cat or horse---to spend time together. Positive interactions may result in improved physical, social, emotional and/or cognitive functioning. For individuals experiencing behavioral or emotional challenges, such therapy can often enhance their sense of well-being, heightening self-esteem while fostering development of healthy recreational outlets.

Elizabeth attends a local public high school while living with a foster family. She enjoys reading the *Twilight* book series. While she loves to crochet and

knit, she’s particularly adept at completing 1000 piece puzzles. She just senses where the pieces go.

Asked about what she’s learned from working with Oscar, Elizabeth said, “If you nag a horse, he won’t listen. You have to change your strategy.”

“Working with the horses and kids together is such a rewarding experience,” Lockhart observes. “The horses just seem to know what each individual youth needs.”

*Center for America’s First Horse*  
[www.centerforamericasfirsthorse.org](http://www.centerforamericasfirsthorse.org)

\*Name changed to protect confidentiality



## MISSION

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

### Staff Profile: Dave McAllister

**Dave McAllister** first worked at Laraway while in college, providing overnight coverage on weekends. McAllister is now in his 10th year as a Case Manager.

"I enjoy the creativity, the flexibility, and the people I work with," McAllister said. "The kids

have taught me humility. I've learned to appreciate the little things, the good days."

When away from the office, McAllister coaches the girls' varsity basketball team at Peoples Academy, serves as a Boy Scout leader, and spends time with his family.



Laraway goes GREEN!

Prefer to receive this newsletter via email? Email [KatherineS@laraway.org](mailto:KatherineS@laraway.org), type GO GREEN in the subject line, and we'll take care of it. Thanks!

Thank you for supporting Laraway's work in the community

**LARAWAY YOUTH  
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SERVICES**

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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.

