



# Bus Stop Conversations

Neighboring news about the Washington Central Supervisory Union schools of Berlin, Calais, Doty Memorial (Worcester), East Montpelier, Rumney Memorial (Middlesex), & U-32.

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**Baseball fans wanted for teen game night June 14**  
**Trash on the Lawn Day U-32**

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See you in Sept.

## Vermont's Commissioner of Education shares his multi-cultural outlook with U-32 students

By Deborah Wolf

Vermont Commissioner of Education, Armando Vilaseca, visited U-32 on May 6 and spoke with students and staff about cultural literacy. A native of Cuba, who graduated from UVM, and has over 29 years of experience in Vermont education, Vilaseca explained that it is very important to understand history and that history depends on the eye of the beholder. He advised that one should always be careful what one reads and to know what the perspective is. For example, what we call the Spanish American War is known as the War of Independence in Cuba.



Vermont Commissioner of Education Armando Vilaseca was invited to speak at U-32 by Cultural Links as a kick-off to Cultural Diversity Day.

country. According to Vilaseca, "It doesn't allow them to get the things they need."

Vilaseca beamed with love for his country as he showed slides of old cars, bicycles, architectural examples, the place his family grew up, and a sugar refinery. He's been back eight times and, like most immigrants, always brings money for family members. He recently gave his aunt \$200 to repair the roof that had been blown off in Hurricane Andrew. One of his slides shows how the former Cuban capital is almost an exact replica of the U.S. capital, and he explained this is because the two countries were so close.

He spoke about the contrast between the tourist areas and the rest of the country which is very poor and said that people in poverty are the most ingenious. For example, a rock wrapped with a torn t-shirt can become a baseball and *anything* can become a baseball bat. Kids play baseball everywhere; it is the national

[see cultural diversity on page 3](#)



U-32 artists Grace Degues and William Gray Ricker displayed photographs, Eleanor Raymond exhibited a drawing, JT Guilfoyle had a collage and Alison Howland exhibited a pastel self-portrait at the 19th Annual Congressional Art Show at the TW Wood Art Gallery in Montpelier. Alison was chosen as this year's state winner and she and a parent will be flown to Washington D.C. for the reception. Her work will remain on display at the Congressional Show for one year, representing all young Vermont Artists. Congratulations Alison!



Students examine the North Branch Nature Center tarantula at Rumney Elementary's first Earth Day, held on May 6. The project was the original idea of sixth grader Brandon Darmstadt who said he had



the idea sitting around the dining room table one night. At left, sixth grader Quinn McVeigh displays materials for nature art, a workshop she led. See page 3 for more.



Simone Labbanca, Emmanuel Riby-Williams, Jeneanne Lunn and Ellen Cooke perform in the atrium at U-32 on Cultural Diversity Day, May 22. "It was a day to celebrate the cultural richness of our earth," said Director Simone Labbanca. See page 3 for more on Cultural Diversity Day.



## MEMORIAL DAY



On Monday, May 25, the Doty Memorial band marched and played in Montpelier's Memorial Day parade. The only marching band in the parade, the band marched down Main Street, turned at State Street and went past the state Capitol building before turning into Montpelier High School for a brief memorial service.

## Board Meetings

U-32: first and third Wednesday, 6:00 p.m., June 3, June 17;  
 Berlin Elementary School: second Monday, 7 p.m., June 8;  
 Calais Elementary School: 8:30 a.m., June 19;  
 Doty Elementary School, Worcester: third Tuesday, 6:30 p.m., June 16;  
 East Montpelier Elementary School: fourth Monday, 6:30 p.m., June 22,  
 Rumney Elementary School, Middlesex: first Tuesday, 6:00 p.m., June 2;  
 Washington Central Supervisory Union Executive Committee: June 24, 6:30 p.m. at WCSU office.

You can view current and past issues of Bus Stop at [www.u32.org](http://www.u32.org). Click on the newsletter link on the left of the page, then click on Bus Stop Conversations.

## Board Minutes

### Rumney, April 7, 2009

- ◆ Adam Rosen reported that the Rumney Well Project is behind schedule because of snowy/wet/muddy ground conditions. Rumney is on the state priority list for additional funds from the federal stimulus program.
- ◆ Rumney received \$12,000 grant from Agency of Natural Resources for building improvements. A group of volunteers will insulate and air-seal the building in late June.
- ◆ Rumney has been approved for a \$25,000 interest-free loan from Department of Environmental Conservation for oil tank replacement. Rosen will prepare a RFP to send to local vendors on the approved vendor list.
- ◆ Board approved the Rumney CARES Award nomination form and the model procedure for addressing harassment as presented.
- ◆ Board will assist Rosen in preparing a buffet breakfast for teachers on Teacher Appreciation Day, May 6. PTO will be asked for support.
- ◆ Food service is seeing increased breakfast and lunch counts, but there have been expenses for repair of the refrigerator and dishwasher.
- ◆ PreK has full enrollment. PreK screening went smoothly. Some students may have to be turned away next year.
- ◆ A two-year contract extension with First Student has been negotiated, with a 3% increase each year. The cost of bus U17, which was added last year, is in dispute.
- ◆ Carole Freeman gave a presentation of Rumney's NECAP testing scores from 2008 and trends over the past 4 years. She warned against using the results from such a small cohort to draw specific conclusions, but advised using the results to focus on patterns and trends. Of particular note is improvement in writing skills, with 75% of the students testing as proficient or above.
- ◆ Update from Full Board meeting: The WCSU transportation proposal was highlighted. It was suggested that the elementary schools not wait until the end of the 2-year contract extension with First Student to discuss the possibility of changing school start times. Beth thanked Adam for the work he has done on transportation proposals. Beth stated we will need to think more creatively about the big picture of rural transportation in terms of vehicles, routes, and community use. Approved contracts for non-bargaining faculty.

### Doty, April 28, 2009

- ◆ Agreed to Worcester Historical Society's request for a letter of recommendation for a grant.
- ◆ David Hartnett agreed to prepare a written report on the history of the furnace purchase and problems.
- ◆ Hartnett reported on the purchase of a new phone system.
- ◆ Hartnett reported on the Action Plan and plans to dovetail this with WCSU's Strategic Plan.
- ◆ Funding has been received to continue the

- Doty Spud Project with Two Rivers Farms in Montpelier.
- ◆ Doty students working with Artists-in-Residence will perform on June 10th.
- ◆ Harnett reported scheduling was going well and included the new Spanish teacher.
- ◆ The board asked Harnett to provide Pre-K and K children numbers for the May meeting.
- ◆ Awarded a two-year extension of transportation services to First Student, Inc.
- ◆ Authorized a bid process for the roof insulation and lighting.
- ◆ Accepted a resignation and approved the appointment of a classroom teacher.
- ◆ Approved ratification of the Negotiated Teachers' Agreement for 2008-2010.

### U-32, May 6, 2009

- ◆ Conrad Smith reported the RFP for a general contractor for the Central Office has been put out.
- ◆ Keith Gerritt reported the Mexico trip went well, monitoring of virus, and complimented the nursing staff.
- ◆ Mark Mooney reported on school safety and security issues.
- ◆ Robbe Brook reported on the plan of the second year of the strategic plan.
- ◆ Discussed fundraising, the current policy and possible changes.
- ◆ Discussed Administrator Evaluation and Review Process, policy and suggested changes.
- ◆ Discussed curriculum development, how decisions are made and the Board's role.
- ◆ Approved ratification of the Negotiated Teachers' Agreement for 2008-2010.
- ◆ Approved ratification of the Educational Support Personnel Agreement for 2008-2010.
- ◆ Authorized Ginny Burley to sign Agreements on behalf of the Board.
- ◆ Approved 2009-2010 ESP Staffing as presented.◆



*Bus Stop Conversations* is published 16 times in the school year by Washington Central Friends of Education, Inc., a private, non-profit corporation committed to strengthening the communication and cooperation between residents of the five district towns of Berlin, Calais, East Montpelier, Middlesex, and Worcester, and the Washington Central Supervisory Union schools. No tax money is used for the production or publication. Send correspondence to: Editor, Deborah Wolf, Washington Central Friends of Education, PO Box 324, Montpelier, VT 05601; e-mail: [dwolf@u32.org](mailto:dwolf@u32.org)

### June 17: Last day of school for students

#### Activities

### U-32

June 4: Senior Honors Reception  
 June 5, 6: Variety Show, 7 p.m.  
 June 11: Middle School Parent Teacher Council meeting  
 June 12: U-32 graduation  
 June 16: Eighth grade step-up, 7 p.m.

### Berlin

June 2, 3: Grades 5/6 production of "Peter Pan," 7 p.m.  
 June 4: Grades 3-4 to U-32 – Language Buddies, 12:20 – 1:25 p.m.  
 June 5: Grades 5/6 Field Trip to Boston 6 a.m. – 9 p.m.  
 June 11: Grade 5/6 – Dance, 7 – 9 p.m.  
 June 16: Schoolwide Picnic, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.  
 June 17: "Step-Up" for all grades, 9:30-10 a.m. Graduation, 10:30 a.m.

### Calais

June 1- 5: Annual Used Book Sale  
 June 2: Spring Concert, 6:30 p.m.; Retirement Party / Ice Cream Social, 7:30 p.m.  
 June 10: Field day  
 June 15: 6th grade graduation  
 June 17: Step-up day, 10-11:30 a.m., Slideshow, 11:30 a.m.

### Doty

June 10: Meet the Arts Plus residents, 5:30 p.m.  
 June 10: K/1 and 5/6 plays, 6:30 p.m..  
 June 15: 2/3/4 plays, 6:30 p.m.  
 June 17: Entire school to Wrightsville  
 June 20: Graduation, 10:30 a.m.

### East Montpelier

June 15: EMES Graduation, 5:00 p.m.  
 June 16: U-32 Step-up day

### Rumney

June 4: All-School Meeting, 2:30-3:20 p.m.  
 June 4: Fine Arts Night, 6:30-7:30 p.m.  
 June 6: Spring Fair, 10:00-2:00  
 June 8: Spring Concert, 6:30 p.m.  
 June 11: Weatherization Project-Volunteer Orientation: 5:30-9:30 p.m.  
 June 15: Graduation, 7 p.m.  
 June 16: Field Day & Step-Up Day  
 June 17: All-School meeting, 9:05-9:45 a.m.  
 June 26: Weatherization Project--Work Day, 7 a.m.-3 p.m.  
 June 27: Weatherization Project--Work Day #2: 7 a.m.-3 p.m. BBQ celebration following

**There is still space in most Community Connections camps. Sign up now!**  
**Summer Camps for Grades 1-6: June 22–Aug. 14.**  
**Summer Camps for Middle and High School Students**  
 Go to [www.communityconnections.us](http://www.communityconnections.us) for details and registration form or call 223-3456.

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pastime. Describing the inside of his cousin's kitchen, everything is handmade; as there are no box stores.

He said Cuban society is very diverse and is a good model for us. But that Cuba is a communist dictatorship. Villaseca said, "It is a two way street: Cuba blames the U.S. for all their problems. If we take away the embargo then they'll have to look at their own problems internally."

Vilaseca ended with: "I love Cuba because I am Cuban and I feel most at home there. I love the people, climate, music, everything. People are so friendly. You pick up hitchhikers for help getting places, you drink espresso at all hours of the day or night..."

Vermont Commissioner of Education Vilaseca was invited to speak at U-32 by the nonprofit **Cultural Links**, as a kick off to Cultural Diversity Day.

Many thanks to the Bay Paul Foundation and the Anne Slade Frey Charitable Trust for their support of Cultural Links. ❖

**Cultural Diversity Day** is a very important project of the nonprofit organization **Cultural Links** which has the mission of promoting cultural literacy at U-32.

Some of the other projects that Cultural Links has sponsored this year at U-32 include the **Peace and Understanding Film Festival** in February where three films were shown and representatives from the countries depicted in



the films led discussion; **Soul**, a presentation by four singers from different countries because music can promote peace and understanding; and bringing **Mexican migrant workers** to speak with Sarah Volinsky's Spanish class. For more information about Cultural Links, contact Carolyn Shapiro at carolyn@energybalance.us



Najiba Benabess, Economics assistant professor at Norwich University, spoke to students about her native Morocco at Cultural Diversity Day at U-32. Other speakers included natives of India, Rwanda, China, Afghanistan and others.



Many organizations and countries were represented at Cultural Diversity Day at U-32, May 22, including AFS, Kroka, Montpelier to Thailand, Planting Hope, VT Intercultural Semesters and Volunteers for Peace. Links for many of these organizations can be found at [www.u32.org/v2files/branch.html#cultur](http://www.u32.org/v2files/branch.html#cultur) Students had opportunities for learning about a variety of cultures without leaving school.

## U-32 trip to Bermuda

U-32 Marine and Fresh Water Biology students recently returned from the Bermuda Institute of Marine Science where they collected data on fish species. They identified over 80 species of fish, including two very rare species. Observations were made on plankton, marine invertebrates, and coastal plants. The students also visited museums

and studied the history of Bermuda.

Below are reflections from some of the students on the research trip. Brian Slopey, instructor for Marine and Fresh Water Biology, led

the trip and was accompanied by 18 students and 6 adult chaperones.

"This research trip was truly a once in a lifetime chance. Not only did we get to see breathtaking reefs and fish, but also we got to do it with our class and friends. As we learned the fish names in the months before the trip, I was

skeptical about remembering them in the water, but as we were snorkeling around, I retained all of it. I never could have imagined how beautiful the reefs were and how many cool different creatures we saw. We had fun in the water, but we also had fun on the off times, bonding with each other. It was such a privilege to have this

opportunity." – Brittany Clark

"I had a lot of fun on the trip. It not only acted as an introduction to a higher level of data collection but also as a final trip and a good end-

ing to senior year. I was a little worried about the night snorkel, but once we were in the water and I realized it wasn't as truly dark as I thought, I was content. That actually turned into one of the highlights of the trip because we were able to see numerous species that were not available during the daytime." – Luke Hadden



At Rumney Elementary's "Earth Day," retired teacher Carolyn Silsby led a plant identification workshop on the nature trail (left). At right, Chip Darmstadt from North Branch Nature Center led the very popular insect identification.

## Trash on the Lawn at U-32

What would inspire high school students to collect a whole day's worth of the school's garbage, and weigh and sort through it? Apparently a desire to teach their community to take better care of the earth's resources. On May 13, at "Trash on the Lawn" day, students weighed 304.5 pounds of garbage and determined that the school sends 54,720 pounds (27.4 tons) of trash a year to the landfill. Although composting is going well, the students say the school needs to do better with recycling as they found a significant amount of recyclables in the garbage. ❖



### A message from Central Vermont New Directions Coalition

Youth who start drinking before the age of 15 are four times more likely to develop alcoholism, a chronic medical disease at some point in their lives, than those who begin drinking at 21.