

VIEWPOINTS

ROCK POINT SCHOOL

FALL/WINTER 2014



Become Your Best Self



ROCK POINT SCHOOL

Letter from the Head of School

Greetings from Rock Point School,

I hope this newsletter lets you see our students' academic opportunities, creative pursuits, and engagement with community. These articles contain just a sampling!

I recently had the opportunity to attend the Episcopal Diocesan Convention in Vermont. I took two students along to speak to a group of about 300 people about the School. After giving some background about the School, I invited the two young women who had come with me to speak, each one telling her story. They brought down the house! their openness, courage, and reflection on their own growth moved people deeply. They were remarkable in their abilities to describe their journeys before and during Rock Point School. I've worked here for 25 years, and I am still amazed and touched by the students who choose Rock Point School as part of their decision to become their best selves. I feel lucky and grateful to witness and be a part of this year after year.

The weekend of June 12-14 is our next Rock Point School reunion. I look forward to seeing former students and to hearing their ongoing life stories. I hope that parents of alums will also join us for the reunion. Parents of students are such an important part of our school community. Early in the new year, we will be sending invitations with more information, as well as posting information about the reunion on our website. You can stay connected with us through our website, Facebook, Twitter, email, phone, and even snail mail. We love to hear from alums and friends of Rock Point. I hope this finds you well.

Sincerely,

C.J. Spirito
Head of School

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C.J. and some staff members dressed up for Halloween.

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Academics at Rock Point School



Our core classes—English, Math, Science, History, Art—are designed to help students develop strong critical thinking skills, communication, inquiry and research skills, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Because our classes are small (4-8 students on average), teachers can work with students as individuals, help them discover and pursue their interests, and challenge them at their growth edge. We offer explicit instruction in how to plan, begin, and complete projects, as well as help dividing work into manageable tasks, so that our students, who tend to be quite bright, can create work representative of their understanding and creativity.

Our classrooms expand to include our 140-acre property, the vibrant city of Burlington, and Vermont in general. We use our forest as an additional science lab, attend theater performances, visit art galleries and historical locations around the state, and attend local government meetings to enhance what we do in the classroom. We manage a garden and run a small apiary and a maple-sugaring program on our property. These, as well as many field trips, allow students experiential learning, as well as opportunities to take on leadership positions. For example, as part of our maple-sugaring program, students give tours to groups of pre-school and elementary school children and teach them the sugaring process—and feed them ice cream with syrup!.



Off campus, we take advantage of the many nearby colleges to attend symposiums, tech fairs, and readings or performances. We also help motivated students pursue an internship, job, or volunteer opportunity to help them meet their own learning or career goals.

In **English** classes, **literature comes to life**, whether it is through staging *The Crucible* as a launching pad for discussions about reputation, social pressure, and power, or whether connecting themes of novels to theories of science or philosophy, through watching Ted Talks and pursuing other relevant sources.

Our strong **Art program** combines art history with studio art, and **the students curate an art show** each spring of current student work and alumni art. In addition to traditional art, students can learn how to create stained glass, fused glass, mosaics, videos, and more.

In **Math**, students study Algebra, Geometry, and Pre-calculus. This math not only serves as the foundation for higher levels of math needed for engineering and computer coding, but also **helps train the mind for all kinds of problem-solving**.

Our **History** program has both a strong experiential-learning component as well as a strong essay-writing component in the curriculum. Students learn to grapple with and **grasp the complexities of events and politics, ask meaningful questions, and search for answers individually and together**.

Our **Science** classes (Biology, Chemistry, and Physics) explore the practical application of the concepts in these disciplines, so, as much as possible, **we get out and explore science in the world**.

EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES

by Katherine, junior

Since Burlington, VT is a college town, it attracts many interesting lecturers and scholars who come to town to give talks about issues that concern the next generation. Being here at Rock Point School, there are many unique opportunities to expand our intellectual horizons. For example, at UVM there is a series that brings world-renowned historians to the university to give lectures that are open to the public. We've been to three lectures so far this year, and all were quite interesting.

We also attend local Neighborhood Planning Association meetings, which give a good sense of democracy in action and provide connections with the government issues we study in history.

My favorite event this year, however, was a keynote speech by the documentary filmmaker Jennifer Siebel Newsom. Ms. Newsom is a powerful woman. This is less of a declarative statement than it is a fact. As a graduate of Stanford, she decided to become an actress—an unexpected decision from a woman with an MBA from one of the nation's top colleges, but ultimately a pivotal one. After witnessing the entertainment industry's treatment of women, Ms. Newsom became passionate about starting a conversation about gender roles. She wrote and directed a film, "Miss Representation," a documentary promoting gender equality that offers an alternative to the now-stigmatized feminist movement. In October, we attended Ms. Newsom's keynote address about Women and Leadership, followed by a panel discussion that included former Vt. Governor Madeleine Kunin, Green Mountain Power CEO Mary Powell, and CEO and commando founder Kerry O'Brien.

In "Miss Representation," Ms. Newsom illuminates and fights against the silent war of social paradigms. These social paradigms that silently shape our national consciousness are one of the final forefronts of the gender equality movement. Unfortunately they may also be the hardest to conquer. Newsom is aiming to help both genders with her work concerning gender roles and objectification. In her next documentary she plans to focus on gender equality and how it affects men.



Former VT Governor Madeleine Kunin (center) with RPS students and staff.



Jennifer Siebel Newsom (left) with RPS students.



VOLUNTEER EFFORTS

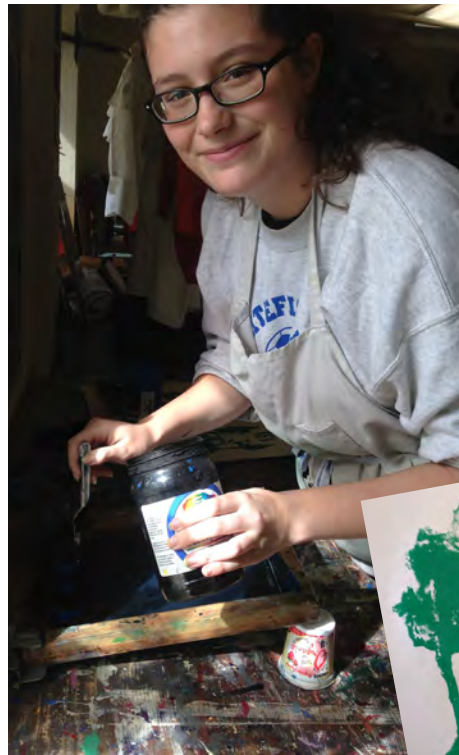
by Julia, senior

One of the things that Rock Point School promotes is the opportunity to get involved in community service. This year, we've started strong with volunteering in our community. Shortly after school began, several students went to Burlington High School to volunteer at the concession stand during a girls' varsity soccer game. They grilled and sold burgers and hotdogs, made popcorn, and managed the register. They have now done this a few times. Leah, a senior who participated, said that "working at the concession stand was a good experience." RPS students will continue to work the concession stand throughout the year to help our neighbor high school raise money for its sports teams.

We also helped set up and work at the Harvest Run at the Intervale in Burlington Vermont. This is a 5k run for kids and adults in the Intervale, which is farming land. We helped to set up the children's running pathway and, during the run, we ran with the kids to make sure they kept to the path. After the run, we did face painting for the kids.

In late October, we hosted our annual Ooky Spooky, a 5k race at the school that raises money to support COTS, a great local organization that helps individuals and families secure both temporary shelter and permanent housing. Our whole school participates in this event. Some students work the registration table, others act as course guides, and some run the race.

This fall we also participated in the Hike for Hunger, which raises awareness and money to help prevent childhood hunger in Vermont. We are looking forward to more community service opportunities this year!



Left: During a unit on screen printing, Julia transfers a photo of her painted face onto the t-shirts for the Ooky Spooky 5k Race.

Below: Students participated in the Hike for Hunger to benefit Hunger Free Vermont.



On Saturday, Oct. 18, 2014, Rock Point School held the 12th annual Ooky Spooky 5k Race to benefit the Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS) in Burlington. There was a record-breaking 125 participants, and Rock Point School raised \$1,020 for COTS!



SPOTLIGHT ON STUDENTS

by Sam, senior



JIMMY, SENIOR

Jimmy is a senior this year, and he is taking on many extracurricular and entrepreneurial ventures, in addition to his core courses and doing college applications. Jimmy has been hired as a professional event photographer for several different events, including the Burlington Color Run, a Zombie Walk, and even a wedding. Jimmy is thinking about deferring going to college for a year in order to remain in Burlington after he graduates to pursue further photography opportunities. You can see some of Jimmy's beautiful photography at luciddreams.smugmug.com.

ELI, FRESHMAN

Eli, a freshman, enjoys the hands-on approach to learning that is woven into the Rock Point School curriculum, compared to the more traditional approach of the middle school he came from. Eli likes to be outside, and some examples of things he likes to do are swimming, biking, running, hiking, and skateboarding. Eli said, "Compared to my last school, which was a more traditional school, I am able to see the difference in this supportive environment. Classes are small enough to feel comfortable." Despite being one of the few freshmen at Rock Point School this year, Eli feels like he fits in with the whole community.



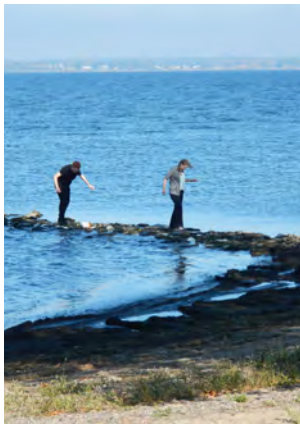
KATHERINE, JUNIOR

Katherine, a junior, arrived mid-way through last year at Rock Point School. One of the things that Katherine enjoys about Rock Point School is the opportunity for students to discover who they are and who they want to be. Katherine can often be found around the school deep in interesting conversations with other students about current events and a wide range of other topics. She says that at Rock Point she has "gotten to know some really fantastic kids at a more intimate level than I would have in public school."



Gerry Davis Photography.

After classes and studying, our evenings and weekends are full of activities and adventures: soccer games, camping, photography, skateboarding, pressing cider, harvesting honey, kayaking on the nearby beach, time in the pottery studio, baking, hanging out with friends and much more.



MEET OUR STAFF



Kelsey was a biking Lumberjack as she helped out during Rock Point's 12th annual Ooky Spooky 5k.

KELSEY GUARINO, RESIDENTIAL EDUCATOR

We are so pleased to have Kelsey here as a live-in dorm staff this year. Kelsey interned at Rock Point School last year, and right away we loved her vibrant energy and playfulness, sense of humor, love of sports, and wonderful connection with Rock Point students. Kelsey graduated from the University of Vermont with a degree in Exercise & Movement Science.

We hope to bring you an interview with Kelsey in the next *Viewpoints*.

MARIKA (MARI) DALTON, SCIENCE

Rock Point welcomes science teacher Marika (Mari) Dalton.

Mari graduated from Vassar College and went on to get her MS and PhD from Michigan Technological University. She has taught science in many venues, including teaching undergraduates at Bates College, Johnson State College, and Michigan Tech. She's also taught summer youth classes in engineering and outdoor adventure. As a geologist and researcher, Mari has traveled all over the world to visit volcanoes, most recently in August of 2014 to Iceland! We hope you enjoy getting to know Mari a bit through this Q & A below. We are really enjoying spending our days with her at Rock Point.



year. I'm interested in the practical application of the concepts in these disciplines, so we're trying to get out and see science in the real world. This fall we're building a (hopefully) working trebuchet as part of Physics class, and visiting our water and wastewater treatment plants in our study of Chemistry.

RPS: Did you really live next to a volcano?

Mari: Sure did! I lived in Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park for three months, working with the U.S. Geological Survey to monitor and study their active volcanoes. I've also been lucky enough to camp on several volcanoes during the course of my fieldwork.

RPS: What do you enjoy most about teaching here?

Mari: I enjoy getting to know our students on a one-on-one basis. Our students are such individuals and it's great spending time with them, and discovering where their interests intersect with the science curriculum.

RPS: What courses are you teaching at RPS?

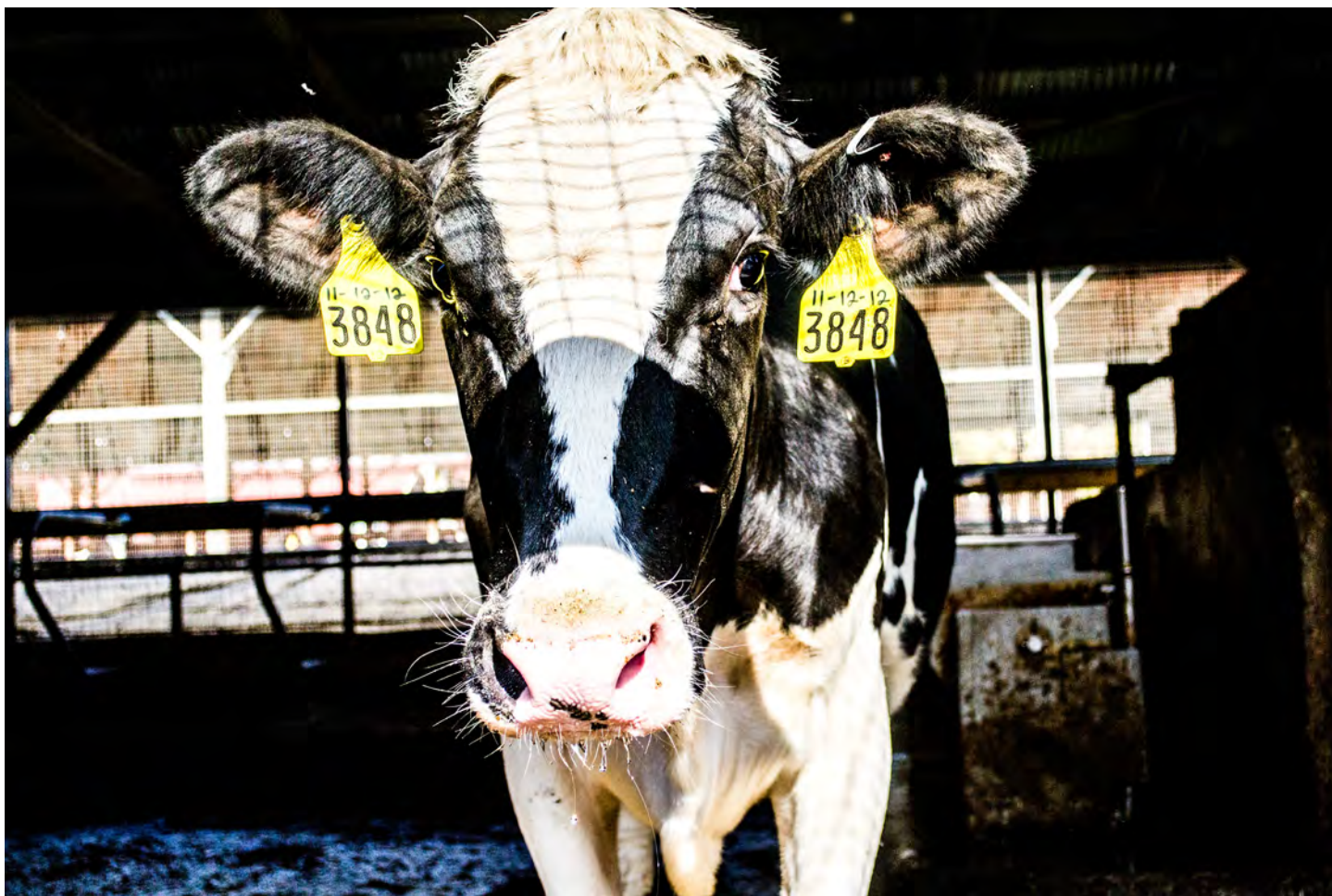
Mari: We're studying biology, chemistry, and physics this

RPS: What do you hope students will remember about your classes?

Mari: I hope that students will remember that 1) science plays a huge role in our lives in so many unexpected ways, and 2) it's not an elite subject in which most people can't participate. Science is everywhere, and every day we question things scientifically and learn more about our world.

RPS: What are your hobbies and/or interests?

Mari: I'm happiest exploring the out-of-doors. My favorite ways to do this are hiking, skiing, paddling, and biking. When I can't get outside, I can be found communing with my wood stove, reading fiction, and playing with my niece and nephew.



EXPLORING LOCAL INDUSTRY

by Jimmy, senior

Photos by Jimmy Dollard,
luciddreams.smugmug.com

Vermont is a state filled with interesting industry, innovation, and culture, including a number of farm and food-based businesses. In any given week, you might find a group of us heading out to learn about farms, sustainability, the local environment, and more. Two highlights of this fall's trips were to the Monument Dairy Farm and the Ed Weed fish hatchery.

We arrived at Monument Dairy Farm early and were greeted by one of the foremen and then taken back to where the milk is packaged. Many of the students thought it was amazing to see where our milk actually comes from. (At Rock Point, we have gotten many of our dairy products from Monument Dairy.) We took a tour through the rest of the factory, then took a trip down to where the cows were kept. We saw the adult milking cows, the pregnant cows, and the baby cows. We also got to take a look at the methane-powered generator, which creates enough energy to completely power the farm.

Later in the day, we visited the Ed Weed fish culture station. This culture station was amazing because of the size of the operation. It is the largest culture station in Vermont, and it supports supplying Vermont's lakes and streams with fish, for both sport and to help with the restoration of the species to Vermont's water bodies.



Monument Dairy Farm in Middlebury, VT, provides much of the dairy products for Rock Point School and other locals.

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Head of School C.J. Spirito reunited with Rock Point School alumni while on a trip to Boston this fall.

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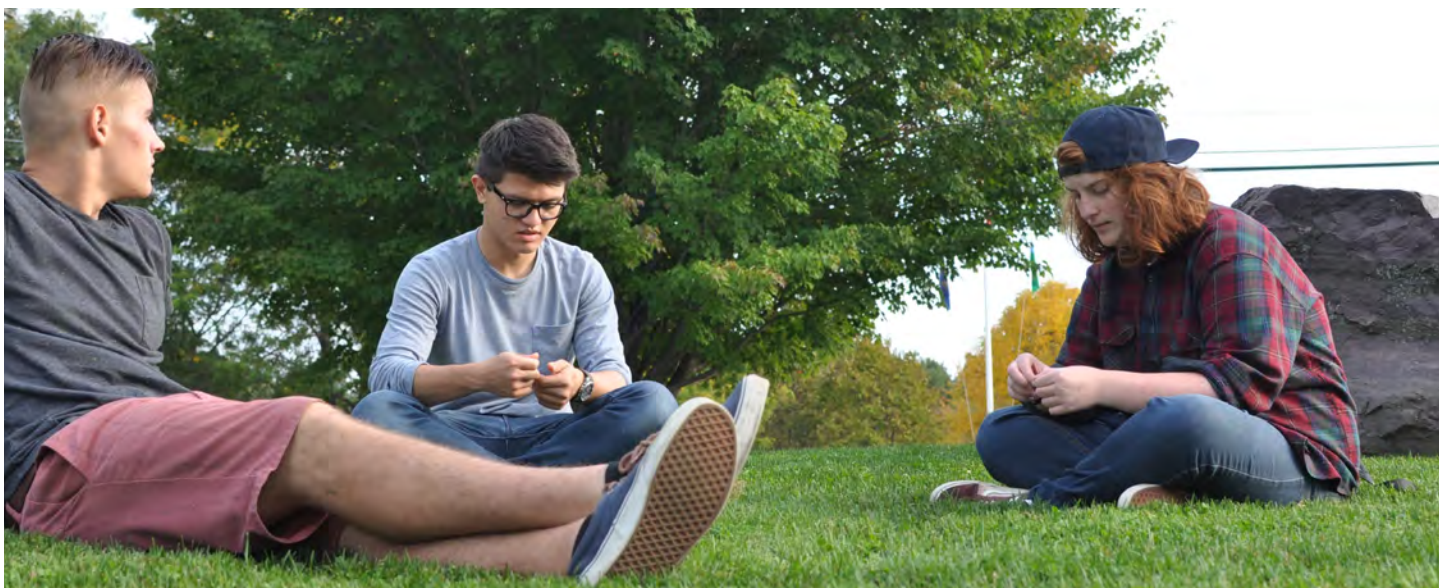
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Thank you!

THE MISSION OF ROCK POINT SCHOOL is to provide a small supportive educational community for teenage girls and boys, where they can become successful students and learn skills for living in a community with peers and adults. The school is committed to providing the educational, cultural, spiritual, and recreational opportunities necessary to accomplish these goals.

