



# VIPS Happenings

## Falmouth Volunteers In Public Schools

Volume 20, No. 2 Winter 2008

### Mentors Needed for VIPS School-based Mentoring Programs

Throughout the month of January, VIPS celebrated **National Mentoring Month** by hosting a series of training and informational events for new and experienced mentors. VIPS oversees two school-based mentoring programs, **Project RISE** (Raising Interest and Self Esteem), geared for students in grades K-8, and the **Falmouth High School Mentoring Program**. These programs, says Susan Largay, mentor programs leader for VIPS, “match caring adult mentors with students who have not yet adjusted their social and academic skills to their full potential.”



FHS mentors and their students enjoy pizza party get-togethers three times each school year, courtesy of Kosta's Pizza.

Each year, VIPS receives many requests from guidance and adjustment counselors, teachers, and administrators seeking mentors for students.

Unfortunately, there are more students in need of a mentor than we can accommodate at this time. These students are missing out on a great opportunity to form a relationship with a caring

adult—someone who is there *just for them* and can serve as a receptive audience for the student's concerns, interests, and latest accomplishments, while serving as a role model, supporter, and friend.

If you can spare *one hour each week during the school year*, or if you know someone who might be interested in mentoring, please let us know. **Mentors are needed at each school**, so volunteers could choose a school that is closest to their home or office. A mentor training and information session is held each month, so give us a call today and we can get you matched with a student in just a couple of weeks!



Meetings between Project RISE mentors and their students might involve games, puzzles, arts and crafts, outdoor recess or lunch, and sharing favorite hobbies, interests, and activities.

New and veteran mentors are welcome to attend a **special training workshop**, scheduled for Wednesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>. VIPS welcomes trainers from the **Mass Mentoring Partnership**, who will come to Falmouth to present a customized, 2-hour training program. It will be held at Highfield Hall beginning at 9:30 a.m. (registration begins at 9:00 a.m.). The training is free to participants but space is limited and reservations are required.

To learn more about the mentoring programs, training, or to register for the March 5<sup>th</sup> workshop, contact the VIPS office.

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### Tee Off for VIPS May 30<sup>th</sup>

Spring will be here soon and so will the annual **VIPS Crane Classic Golf Tournament**. The 2008 tournament—one of VIPS' biggest fundraisers—will be held Friday, **May 30<sup>th</sup> at Falmouth Country Club**. If you are a golfer, you do not want to miss this event! Each year, a full field of golfers hits the links to raise funds that support VIPS training events, programming, and recognition events. At the end of the tournament, golfers enjoy a delicious catered dinner under the tent, while raffles, live and silent auctions, and golf prizes are awarded. Interested in golfing? Donating a raffle prize or auction item? Contact VIPS today at (508) 548-1621 or visit the website, [www.falmouthvips.org](http://www.falmouthvips.org) and go to Events.

### Last Call for Dining Books

A handful of VIPS edition **Cape Cod Dining Club** books are still available. Over 70 Cape restaurants offer discounts to Dining Club members and most can be used for lunches or dinners, including many located in Falmouth, Mashpee, and Bourne. \$30 each; available at the VIPS office or at **Video Paradise** (426 East Falmouth Highway, 508-457-1388); pay with cash or check made payable to VIPS.

### Important Reminder

**Log your hours!** Each school has a **VIPS Volunteer Logbook**: a 3-ring binder, with a page for every volunteer filed alphabetically. Don't forget to count hours spent at home preparing to volunteer, baking, assisting with events, etc. **If your volunteer hours aren't spent at a school**, feel free to call them in to us at (508) 548-1621 or e-mail your hours to [vips@falmouth.k12.ma.us](mailto:vips@falmouth.k12.ma.us).



## About VIPS

**Falmouth Volunteers In Public Schools (VIPS)** was initiated in 1982 as a way to increase interaction between Falmouth schools and the community. Today, 26 years later, VIPS has grown from eight volunteers at Falmouth High School to over 1,100 volunteers in all seven schools. VIPS provides the schools with an organized, reliable volunteer corps that supplements and enriches the curriculum. Volunteers are given the opportunity to use their talents, time and energy in creative, worthwhile ways. Each year, volunteers log thousands of hours—nearly 44,000 last year alone—while supporting the students, faculty, administration and the community. Local businesses contribute to this unique partnership by sponsoring events, providing tax-deductible contributions, donating raffle and auction items, and providing release time or support for employee volunteers.

### VIPS Staff:

**Tracey Crago** – Director  
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## Share Your Ideas!

VIPS is looking for your input and ideas about...well, everything! Have an idea for a newsletter article? Is someone worthy of recognition? Is there a program that could use some support? Do you have ideas for the VIPS website? How can VIPS be a part of your school events? Let us know! **Call or e-mail us anytime!**



Kelly Geist  
Teaticket



Lori Bianchi  
East Falmouth

## School Buzz

This issue of *Happenings'* School Buzz is all about reading! At **East Falmouth Elementary**, students have been participating in *Go for the Gold*, a reading incentive program designed to motivate students to read for a minimum of 20 minutes per day outside of school. Librarian **Kristin Bergeron** says the program objective is for students to develop lifelong reading habits. The *Go for the Gold* program has students tracking their reading minutes on logs and students can receive prizes when they reach bronze, silver, and gold levels. "Reading logs also have a place for students to review a favorite book and a parent corner that offers tips on reading to their child," says Bergeron.

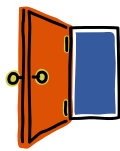


Nancy Koss and her son Sam reading his favorite passage out of *George's Marvelous Medicine*.

At **North Falmouth Elementary**, the PTO co-sponsors a monthly parent-child book club called **ReadNSync**. Each fall, volunteers **Caroline Gagan** and **Nancy Koss** select the year's books—including Roald Dahl's *George's Marvelous Medicine* and George Seldon's *The Cricket in Times Square*—and publicize the list through the PTO website, newsletters, and flyers. Gagan reports that between six and 10 students attend each month with a parent, including some who have been members since the program began three years ago. She reports "favorite passage reading" as one of the most popular parts of the meeting, next to snack time. "The kids really seem to enjoy the time together answering questions and talking about books," says Gagan.

Readers get competitive over at **Morse Pond**, where the school's Library Media Center runs a reading incentive program known as **Battle of the Books**, part of America's Battle of the Books, or ABB ([www.battleofthebooks.org](http://www.battleofthebooks.org)). According to librarian **Liz Abbott**, students are placed into homeroom teams. Copies of the books, selected by ABB, are available within the pods and in the library. Presently, students are reading the selections in preparation for the classroom "battles" designed to test readers' knowledge about the books. These battles, says Abbott, will take place in the library throughout April. Winners from each classroom will go against the winners from their team classroom. "Battle Day" takes place in May for pod winners, who eventually face off against grade level winners. The winning team will go out to lunch in a limo!

## Inside VIPS



It was months in the making, but the new **VIPS website** ([www.falmouthvips.org](http://www.falmouthvips.org)) was worth the wait! Designer **Lori Dolby** transformed our text, photos, and forms into a clean, easy-to-navigate site where

volunteers, businesses, and school staff will be able to learn about our programs and volunteer opportunities, download our forms, sign up for events, contact us, and even locate our office! *Check out the new site today and let us know what you think!*



We're always telling you we want to hear from you... now we have an easy way for you to give us feedback and input: the **Volunteer Survey**—an online survey that will take less than 10 minutes to complete. Simply go to our new website, [www.falmouthvips.org](http://www.falmouthvips.org) and click on the "Take the Volunteer Survey" button. Don't have access to a computer? We have paper copies of the survey available—just give us a call!

We'd like to welcome two additional VIPS building coordinators to our hard-working ranks: **Kelly Geist at Teaticket Elementary** and **Lori Bianchi at East Falmouth Elementary**. Kelly and Lori are active parent volunteers at their respective schools and will each join a team of veteran building coordinators, giving VIPS even more of a presence at these schools.



## Spotlight: Parent Connection Series

Face-to-face meetings arranged by strangers who meet on the Internet, students subjected to bullying at school, underage drinking parties, drug deals made at a school function, adolescent depression, teen suicide... Open a newspaper or turn on the television news on any given day and you are likely to read about at least one such scenario.

Does it happen here? Could it happen here? Where can a parent or mentor turn for resources, and information about the issues facing our children?

The **Parent Connection Series**, a collaboration between the Falmouth Public Schools' **Office of Pupil Personnel Services** and VIPS, was designed to raise awareness about some of the issues facing children. "You hear the expression 'knowledge is power'... we are hoping to give that power to parents, mentors, and community members by providing them with access to information and local resources," explains Tracey Crago, VIPS Director. The series, launched in November, has covered topics including adolescent drug and alcohol abuse, Internet safety, and childhood anxiety. Still to come: bullying and aggressive behavior, self-destructive behaviors (suicide, eating disorders, cutting), understanding and respecting cultural differences. The seminars are also being taped and broadcast on FCTV's Channel 14.

"Working with school administrators, guidance department leaders and counselors, and utilizing the expertise within many of our local human service organizations, including the **Penikese Island School, Gosnold on Cape Cod, the Falmouth Substance Abuse Commission, and Falmouth Human Services**, among others, we can begin to get the word out about potential threats to our children," says Crago. "We are all working towards the same goal: keeping our children healthy and safe and our community vibrant; joining forces is the way to go."

For more information about the Parent Connection Series, or if you have ideas for future seminar topics or speakers, please contact the VIPS office (508-548-1621, [vips@falmouth.k12.ma.us](mailto:vips@falmouth.k12.ma.us)) or the Office of Pupil Personnel Services at 508-548-0151, ext. 122.

## Volunteer Profile: Bernie Garrett



What do mentoring and curling have in common? Both activities, according to VIPS mentor **Bernie Garrett**, teach good sportsmanship, good citizenship, and instill a sense of self-monitoring—making good choices even in the absence of an authority figure. "There is a code of conduct in curling that is similar to what we, as mentors, encourage in our students," says Garrett. "We show them respect and expect them to show respect to others. By being there for them, we are saying we care about them."

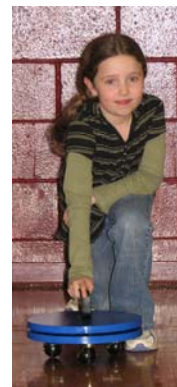
Garrett, a retired CPA, has been a VIPS mentor for six years. His first match was a third grader at Teaticket Elementary, with whom he met weekly throughout the school year at Teaticket, then Morse Pond, and through Lawrence. Currently, Garrett mentors four students: two at Morse Pond, one at Lawrence, and another at Teaticket. He devotes one day each week to mentoring, shuttling back and forth between the schools, often with lunches or snacks for his students.

"You can't imagine the pleasure I get out of spending time with them," Garrett says of his mentees. "Watching these kids grow, seeing how polite they are with me... Even kids who are in a negative environment... that's when a relationship with a mentor can overshadow the bad," he says. Just as his push for curling in the schools has caught on with Falmouth students, Garrett's love of mentoring has spread among his friends and fellow curlers, some of whom have become VIPS mentors. This year, Garrett has been able to do something he's wanted to do for years: introduce students to curling. Gym curling, as it's known, takes the fundamentals of curling—minus the ice and brooms—and transforms a gym floor into a curling sheet. Garrett borrowed gym stones from a curling club in New Hampshire and ran a

*(continued above)*

## Profile (cont'd)

pilot program this fall for Teaticket third and fourth graders with the help of physical education teacher **Carrie Shanahan** and principal **Mike Arth**.



The idea—and the enthusiasm—caught on quickly. That's when Garrett decided Falmouth schools should have their own stones. He worked with his home club, the **Cape Cod Curling Club**, to seek donations and volunteers, then enlisted the talents of Teaticket



Carrie Shanahan and Cameron Astin

parent **Cameron Astin** who transformed boxes of casters, handles, brackets, screws, and

sheets of plywood into gym stones. They are similar in weight and dimension to those that glide over



the ice, only these "stones" are actually wooden disks painted bright red or blue and mounted to caster wheels for

smooth travel across a gym floor. Garrett is now working with East Falmouth Elementary physical education teacher **Dave Watson** and principal **Sam Slarskey** to get the curling program underway there.

Garrett says he hopes to have all of the elementary schools up and running with a gym curling program by the end of the school year, eventually expanding it to include first and second graders as well. If you know Bernie, you know that when this Bronx native puts his mind to something, it's going to get done!



**Celebrate Volunteers!**

**National Volunteer Appreciation Week** is April 27 – May 2 this year and VIPS will be visiting each of the schools to say thank you to our many volunteers. We're calling it **Celebrate Volunteers! day**. The VIPS "road show" will bring VIPS staff and board members out to one school each day, provide refreshments, and offer our thanks to you for all that you do in our schools. You'll receive more information soon.

**Help Wanted!**

Do you speak a **foreign language**? Would you be willing to read to, translate for, or tutor a foreign visitor or student? *Give us a call!*

Do you enjoy working with young students? A **Mullen-Hall kindergarten** teacher would love to have volunteers in her classroom—**mornings**—for her **English Language Arts** and **writing** block. If you are available one or more mornings a week, *please let us know*.

Spring will be here before we know it, and that means **student art shows** are already in preparation mode. Art teachers are always looking for extra hands before and during the art shows—sorting, labeling, hanging, and displaying original creations in the hallways, on tabletops and shelves, and all available wall space at the elementary schools and Morse Pond. If you can help, contact the school building coordinators (for a listing by school, see our website, [www.falmouthvips.org/volunteers/other.htm](http://www.falmouthvips.org/volunteers/other.htm)) or call us!

*Interested? Want to know more? Call or e-mail us today!*

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