



VIPS Happenings



Falmouth Volunteers In Public Schools

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Sports Galore Theme of VIPS Winter Fundraiser

If you were looking for an inexpensive pair of hockey or figure skates, the 3rd annual VIPS Sports Fair was the place to be on Saturday, March 12th! Skates were the number one most donated item this year – and we sold loads of them – to raise money for VIPS programming. Parents were thrilled to pick up inexpensive yet gently-used sports gear, while the kids were eager to try out their new purchases!



Shoppers found great deals on many items, including \$5 skates.

The Sports Fair also featured spring sports leagues sign-ups and sports camp registrations to make it one-stop shopping for sports-minded families. Thanks to VIPS board member **Dayna Meissner** for working with this year’s sponsors—**Total Orthopedic Care, The Clam Man, Balanced Health and Fitness, and Cavossa Disposal Corporation**. Thanks in large part to their generosity, the event raised over \$3,500 for VIPS school-based mentoring

programs in each of the district’s schools. Sports programs taking registrations at the event included **Falmouth Youth Baseball, Falmouth Babe Ruth, Falmouth Pop Warner, Falmouth Youth Hockey, and Falmouth Field Hockey**. Camp information was available for **Just for Kicks Soccer Camp, Paul Harney Junior Golf Camps, Falmouth Ice Arena, and Falmouth Academy Summer Programs**. **Butler’s Sporting Goods** sold new equipment, including special starter lacrosse packages and baseball items, while **Robin’s Nest Embroidery** brought Falmouth spirit wear and sport-related embroidered sweatshirts, jackets, shorts, t-shirts, and sweatpants.



Falmouth Youth Baseball (and VIPS) volunteer Maria Jones takes registrations.

Thanks to all of the Falmouth residents and families who cleaned out their garages and basements in search of outgrown and unused sports gear for this year’s sale! We filled our collection boxes multiple times and thanks to VIPS Board member and volunteer **Rick Baldwin**, and a box truck contributed by fellow board member **Carolyn Woods**, all the gear arrived at the Mullen-Hall gym Friday night where several volunteers sorted, organized, priced, and displayed the donations. Several student and adult volunteers were on hand the



VIPS Board members Carolyn Woods and Karen Chorches are all smiles at the raffle table.

morning of the event helping families find the right gear in the correct sizes. Kudos to raffle prize collector **Karen Chorches** who succeeded in tracking down popular sports-related raffles ranging from autographed sports items, gift certificates for gym memberships and training sessions, lessons, and more. Planning committee members **Ann Jarvis, Emily Mihailescu, Sarah Bouchie, Rich Losordo, and Larry Glueck** provided much needed assistance setting up and working the event.

If you missed it this year, start saving your gear for next year’s event. If you’ve got a large amount of gear, we’ll be happy to pick it up. NOTE: Bikes are always popular and we never have enough lacrosse gear! Questions? Call VIPS.

Reminders

Did you know that **CORI checks are good for one year**? If you are a long time VIPS volunteer, be sure you fill one out *every year*. CORI forms can be found and filled out at any Falmouth school and the administration building. You’ll need to show a photo ID (license, passport, military ID) so be sure to bring it along. A CORI form can be downloaded on the VIPS website, but an authorized school staff member will need to check your ID, so don’t send it in with yours student or in the mail!

The calendar says SPRING so the annual **VIPS Volunteer Recognition Dinner** must be just around the corner! Mark your calendars and save the date: **Tuesday, May 3rd**. We’ll be celebrating you and your fellow volunteers while enjoying a great meal at the **Coonamessett Inn**. Social time begins at 5:30 p.m. and the festivities begin at 6:00. See *you there!*

Inside This Edition

School Buzz	2
Spotlight: Girls Circle Boys Council.3	
Profile: Ollie Zafiriou	3
Inside VIPS	2



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, 29 years later, VIPS has grown from eight volunteers at Falmouth High School to over 1,000 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—approximately 40,499 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.

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School Buzz

The science wing at **Lawrence School** was buzzing with science talk in late January. In preparation for the annual science fair, volunteers from the Woods Hole scientific and engineering community worked one-on-one with students to come up with ideas for projects, advice on getting started and how to design experiments, work with data, and present results. This project is part of the **Woods Hole Science Technology and Education Partnership (WHSTEP)** program and has provided excellent support to Lawrence students for many years. This year, 27 volunteers contributed 101 hours to the project.



Arjun Chaturvedi talked to Lynn Parks during the WHSTEP program

Congratulations to **Lawrence School** 8th grader, **Lily Pariseault**, for being a recipient of this year’s *“Make a Difference” Award* presented by the **JFK Library**. Lily was nominated by Lawrence staff and VIPS for her contributions to the district’s bullying prevention and intervention plan and work on bullying issues through the Peer Leaders program at Lawrence.



Lily Pariseault

At **Morse Pond**, students who get caught in the act are rewarded with a photo in *The Inside Scoop* and a **‘Got Caught’** slip on a bulletin board. But it’s not what you might think: students who ‘Got Caught’ are those who have been seen practicing random acts of kindness or making good choices. Assistant Principal **Todd Oliviera** says the staff was “brainstorming ways of recognizing positive things happening in the school and ‘Got Caught’ was born, sort of like ‘Got Milk.’” Oliviera says, “any adult in the building can catch a student and some of the behaviors that have been ‘caught’ include finding money and turning it in, reporting bullying or watching out for someone, holding the door for someone, picking up or cleaning up without being asked.” In January, 66 students received a ‘Got Caught’ slip; in February the number increased to 73, and 82 in March. At the end of each month, the slips are put into a box and a few are pulled for prizes including public skating passes, bracelets, and ice cream.

Teaticket School is participating in **World Fit Walk** April 25th-June 3rd. Olympic Gold Medalist **Colleen Coyne** will be kicking off the program and representing the school. Students, staff and buddies will track their miles and physical activities to promote health and wellness.

Spotlight: Girls Circle and Boys Council

The **Girls Circle** is a support group for adolescent girls, ages 9-14, that focuses on increasing connections, building strengths, and developing resiliency. The research-based program encourages the development of strength, courage, confidence, honesty, and communication skills for girls and equips group facilitators with skills, resources, and curricula to hold Circles in their communities.

Suzie Hauptmann, social worker for **Falmouth Human Services**, brought the *Girls Circle* program to Falmouth in 2008. “When I first started my job, I spent a lot of time talking to teachers and counselors. The recurring theme was the need for girls support groups,” recalls Hauptmann. Soon after, she learned of *Girls Circle* and found a facilitator training session in Boston. Her first *Girls Circle* session, held at Morse Pond for 6th grade girls, was co-facilitated by **Meg Luizzi**, program director of Falmouth Family Planning for the **Community Health Center of Cape Cod**.

The following year, VIPS partnered with Falmouth Human Services to provide support for additional groups. A grant from the **Cape and Island United Way** provided funds to have VIPS volunteer mentors **Janet Brady**, **Linda Finn**, and **Jill Nehro** trained as *Girls Circle* facilitators. It also provided funds for **Mark Abbott** of **Falmouth Human Services** to attend the training for a counterpart program for boys called **Boys Council**. Additional support has been provided by the **Falmouth Education Foundation** and **Woods Hole Foundation**. Circles cover age-appropriate topics including body image, role models, peer pressure, and friendship. The Council sessions provide boys with opportunities to discuss



healthy competition, bullying, emotions, and gender-related expectations. Each group is limited to 12 participants and the once per week, after-school sessions last from 8-10 weeks.

Girls Circle sessions are held during the school year at **Morse Pond**, for both 5th and 6th grade girls (separately), in the summer at the Rec. Center for girls entering 5th grade, for 7th and 8th grade girls at Lawrence School, and, most recently, a drop-in group at the high school. A **Girls Circle** group for 5th graders, co-facilitated by VIPS volunteers **Linda Finn** and **Jill Nehro**, is just getting started. A 6th grade circle finished up in late March with co-facilitators Suzie Hauptmann and VIPS volunteer **Janet Brady** leading the group. The **Boys Council** sessions have been led by **Mark Abbott** of Falmouth Human Services, with the most recent session co-facilitated by VIPS volunteer **Rick Mignone**.



Participants are enthusiastic about the program, stating: “I feel better about myself,” “I am not as shy,” “Girls Circle is really fun and I met and made new friends,” “I have become a better friend,” “They made talking about your feelings fun,” “I learned that other girls went through things that I went through.”

Hauptman says, “what has happened with *Girls Circle* is a great example of community partnerships. We identified a need and worked together to utilize and capitalize on the strengths and resources of many organizations.” The enthusiasm has continued to build so much so, that the 5th grade Circle filled in only two days! We’d love to keep the momentum going, so VIPS is looking for additional volunteers interested in becoming facilitators. *Interested? Contact VIPS today!*

Volunteer Profile: Ollie Zafirou



VIPS volunteer Oliver (“Ollie”) Zafirou can recall some “intense moments,” as well as some disappointments in his years as a mentor, but he says his current mentee, Stephen, is a different story. “He is, by far, the most fun!” says Zafirou. The pair has been together for six years. “Stephen has always been gregarious and comfortable talking to adults,” says Zafirou, who has witnessed tremendous changes as he’s grown up. In May, Stephen will graduate from the high school, along with three other students who have had VIPS mentors for an average of five years each.

Zafirou first began volunteering at East Falmouth Elementary where his wife Marsha worked as librarian. He began mentoring through Project RISE (Raising Interest and Self-Esteem) in 2002, and says he was the kind of kid who would have benefited from having a mentor. Zafirou says mentoring provides an opportunity “to see what kids are like today.”

Each year, VIPS has between 75-85 students matched with a mentor. In addition to an orientation and training process, mentors meet every 4-6 weeks. This is a chance for mentors to learn from each other and from local experts on a range of topics based on issues taking place in the school or community. Over the years, these meetings have provided Zafirou the chance to observe the differences in relationships between female matches and male matches. “I know it’s Mars and Venus out there,” he says referring to *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*, the 1995 *New York Times* bestseller by Dr. John Gray. “But I really was stunned to see the differences in the relationships through the mentoring program. Girls talk to their mentors, and the guys ‘if they talk’ kind of banter back and forth. It can take a year and a half to get to see the student’s personality,” he says.

When he first met Stephen, Zafirou says he didn’t have many friends. That has all changed. In addition to having many friends, Stephen has had a steady part-time job where he has moved up the ladder of responsibility, and he’s had two internships through the FHS Internship Program. Zafirou says it’s the “hope that you are doing good” that has kept him

Profile (cont’d)

going as a mentor. “There is a huge gray area in terms of ‘how much did I contribute?’” when it comes to seeing the tremendous changes in Stephen, says Zafirou. He believes much of the change can be attributed to age-related maturity, but some who know Stephen also credit his relationship with his mentor.

Guy Loconte, Stephen’s guidance counselor, says Zafirou has been a very positive role model. “Oliver has been a kind hearted and strong mentor for Stephen. He has stepped up to advocate for Stephen when he felt that he needed assistance. He has helped Stephen maintain good grades, continue his education after high school, and explore some of his outside interests.” *Thanks, Ollie and good luck, Stephen!*

Inside VIPS

The VIPS Office has moved back to Falmouth High School! We are now located in room 1056 and we’d love to see you when you are volunteering at—or just visiting—the high school! Everything except our street address—**874 Gifford Street**—has stayed the same. Thanks to the Lawrence School staff and students for their hospitality.

VIPS received a grant from **The Falmouth Fund of the Cape Cod Foundation** for its school-based mentoring programs. This funding presents an exciting opportunity to support and strengthen our work with students in need of a one-on-one relationship with a caring adult. Mentoring works! If you can give one hour a week to spend with a student, call us—you’ll be glad you did!



**Linking the Public Schools
and the Community**

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Upcoming Events
**Annual Volunteer Recognition
Dinner**

Tuesday, May 3rd
Coonamessett Inn
Look for your invitation soon!

**Annual Student Volunteer
Appreciation Event**

Date and Location TBD

**VIPS 26th Annual GOLF
Tournament**

Friday, June 17th
Falmouth Country Club
see box for more information

Tee Off to Support VIPS!

There are plenty of charity golf tournaments in Falmouth—one a week, it seems! So why golf the VIPS tournament? As our biggest fundraiser of the school year, we rely on the proceeds from the golf tournament to support programming that directly benefits students and staff members. From one-on-one mentoring programs to classroom assistance, behind-the-scenes work, tutoring, supporting music, arts, and sports programs, VIPS volunteers and staff members give time, energy, and creativity to enhance the education of Falmouth’s public school students. When you sign up for the **VIPS Golf Tournament**—our 26th annual event—you will enjoy a fun day of golf with friends, a great meal by Quahog Republic, and an opportunity to win fantastic raffle and auction items. But you will also be making it possible for VIPS to carry out its mission of linking Falmouth’s public schools with the diverse resources of our community. **Sign up today:** www.falmouthvips.org/events or call for more information, (508) 548-1621.