



Open Fields News

Medieval Festival Returns May 23

by Mindy Barth

“Unto You does Open Fields send Greetings and Salutations.

Whereas it has been determined that Open Fields, a most excellent Schoole, is in need of material sustenance and future scholars, and further determined that everyone loves Things of Historical Importance, it has been announced that a festive Faire shall occur on the twenty-third of May, Anno Domini 2015, on the Greene of Thetford Hill. The faire shall commence with the tolling of bells at eleven in the forenoon and come to completion at four. All are Welcome to join us!”

Open Fields School once again presents its annual family-friendly Medieval Festival, bringing the Green alive with the sights and sounds of a medieval village. A King and Queen, knights and ladies, peasants, craftsmen, and farmers gather to celebrate the age through music, dance, games of skill and chance, a parade, storytelling, Benny the Dragon, and feats of juggling and acrobatics. Lunch and desserts, including choices for those with special dietary needs, will be plentiful, so bring your appetites and enjoy some festival feasting!

This year, the No Strings Marionette Company will perform *Wasabi*, *A Dragon's Tale*. With morris dancing by Catamount Morris, a Shakespearean sonnet performance, traditional songs, and a maypole dance, there will be entertainment



Students and community members dance the maypole at last year's Faire.

throughout the Festival. Come see a fire spinning show by Phoenix Bazaar, bellydancing demonstrations by Raq On Dance, a sword demonstration by Sensei Aaron Hoopes, and hear traditional songs performed by soprano Mary Ann Stanford and classical guitarist Frank Kelec.

As in years past, this year's festival combines the demonstration of traditional arts with hands-

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on activities. Try your hand at felting, milling, weaving, calligraphy, candle-making, and beading, among others. Kids will love maneuvering their steeds through the horse course, digging for treasures in the bran bucket, trying a bit of swordplay, and getting lost in the hedge maze. Meet Glenfiddich, an 11 year old gelding Highland pony, or get into the spirit of things by dancing around the may pole after visiting our hair braiding and face painting booths.

We'd love to have artisans and craftsmen from the Thetford area demonstrate their talents during the festival. (Traditional arts are preferred.) There is no booth fee or commission required on artisan sales; we only ask that you enhance the festival by demonstrating your art and by answering questions about how you create your products.

Community volunteers (including high school students fulfilling a community service requirement) are always needed to ensure the day is a fun, exciting, and inspirational experience for the children and families who attend. Donations from individuals and sponsorship from businesses also help to make the Open Fields Medieval Festival a success. If you would like to learn more about volunteering or becoming a donor or a sponsor, please contact Mindy Wren Barth at mindy@openfields.org, call Open Fields at 802.785.2077, or visit www.VTMedFest.com.

Admission is \$7 per person; children ages 4 and under are free. Purchase tickets online at or at the gate on festival day. We hope to see you Saturday May 23rd from 11 am to 4 pm at the Medieval Festival!



Claire is ready for action with her tabard, helm and sword.



Benny the Dragon makes an appearance.

Open Fields School

Thetford Hill, Vermont 05074

802-785-2077

info@openfields.org

www.openfields.org

Open Fields is a non-profit, private elementary school. Founded in 1971 by Jean K. Aull, it is open to all children, ages 4 through 12.

Director: Nellie Pennington

Board of Directors: Mary Helen Bentley, Ruth Cserr, Nate Hine, Peg Little, Meg McLean, and Nellie Pennington

Advisory Council: Allison Bush Kanoti, Dilys Evans, Jon Gilbert Fox, Michael O'Donnell, John Quimby, Katrin Tchana, and Dean Whitlock

Staff: Mindy Barth, Leslie Berger, Karen Kreis, Mary Layton, and Jen Manwell

Local History Connections

Jen Manwell

This spring, the six children in Jen's Social Studies class are working with the Vermont Folklife Center to create a short documentary. They are learning photography, video, and interviewing techniques from Scott Miller, a Norwich local and educator. Scott has worked with students in many countries to share their local stories. Our students are documenting the environmental, historical, and cultural story about copper as a local resource that had national impact in technological advances such as the telegraph. As part of the project, they will be interviewing local residents and experts Wesley Burnham (a former telegraph operator) and Bob Johnston (author of *Mine and Men: The Story of Copper In Strafford, VT*). This is an exciting culminating project for the students' year-long study of Thetford and Strafford in the early 1900s.

Building & Grounds

Work on a number of building projects will begin this summer. Replacement of the aging exterior staircase, where so many all-school pictures were taken over the years, is the highest priority, with sill rot on the north side, window replacement on the east wall, and re-shingling the roof following close behind.

Maintaining an old building is never easy – and certainly never inexpensive! – so please consider making a donation to help us keep the building standing and the students safe.

Goodbye, Bob; Hello, Phil

Thanks to a generous donation by former student Hyla Maddalena and her family, one of our aging play structures (affectionately named “Bob” by current students) was replaced over spring break. The climbing wall, larger covered platform, and tire swing on the new set (christened “Phil”) have been a great hit! Phil joins our other existing play structure, “Fred.”

Skip Cady Summer Classes

Skip Cady (skipcady13@gmail.com) will be teaching sculpture classes and special F/X classes at Open Fields starting this summer. The focus of the sculpture classes will be learning the casting process with clay, plaster, latex, or silicone. The special F/X classes will help develop the skills of the structural build and design along with casting and various materials. All levels of experience are welcome, and classes are open to high school students and adults. (Mature middle-schoolers with a specific interest may be accepted as well.) Please contact Skip if you're interested.



Story by Mia

Open Fields Students On An Open Fields Education

What is an Open Fields education all about, anyway? Some of Leslie's language arts students decided to tackle the question:

WHAT A SCHOOL DAY IS LIKE

by Spike

"It looks like a bunch of people playing with toys. Is this a play group? All I see are people playing and having fun. Don't they have classes?"

They do have classes. A teacher will call students upstairs and that's where the classes are held. There's a rotation of kids going up and down all morning long. Everybody has math, language arts, and social studies. What about science? Science is one of those things that we all learn from random experiments that happen along the way, but also on Fridays.

If you look for a schedule, you might ask: "Why isn't there a Friday on it?" Well, Fridays are special. On Fridays there are three groups that rotate between three teachers, with science, art, cooking and other skills that don't happen in regular classes. We sometimes make a real mess. Downstairs, people can read, do art or build with stuff.

After classes are over for the day, we clean up, have meeting, lunch and quiet time, and maybe play a board game or do something else quiet. Afterwards, we go outside and at the end of the day we get picked up.

THE MATH CHALLENGE

by Robin

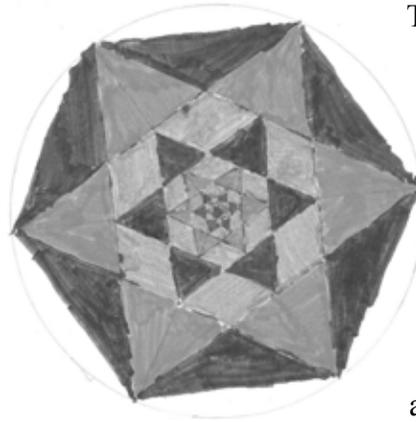
The students of Open Fields were challenged with a challenge so compelling that we could not resist it. We were told that if fifteen students out of the twenty five children at school could do fifty multiplication problems in two minutes, (twenty addition for the little ones)

that the whole school would have a giant ice cream party!

Another added component was trying to beat our personal best scores. There wasn't much competition between peers; it was mostly competing with oneself even after we obtained our goal. The lowest score was fifty-five seconds.

We happily accepted the challenge and in no time at all we were planning a party.

The ice cream was delicious and we learned a lot!



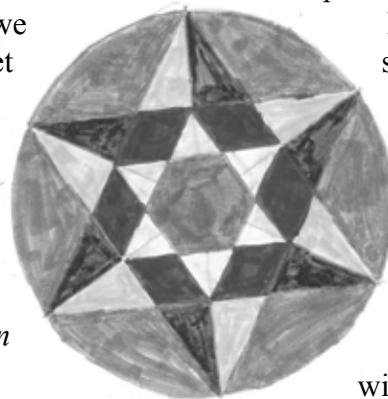
FUN FRIDAYS

by Leia

On Fridays, we get away from regular classes and do activities that are fun and often new to us. We explore subjects that kids usually don't already know about, like survival skills and handson science.

There are so many different things can happen on a Friday. For example, we have cooking days on holidays like Chinese New Year and Thanksgiving. We also go on field trips during Friday class time. We have gone to plays and on nature hikes to The Shacks. We have also gone to the Beaver Pond. We only sometimes see beavers, despite its name.

Fridays are very special. I love every single activity. Even though we have a lot of fun, we are still learning during Friday class time.



HELLO PEOPLE WITH KIDS

WHO NEED EDUCATION:

by Beatrice

Our school is so great that people will even come here from a different state. Right now at our school, we have kids from as far away as Concord, VT and New London, NH.

I started as a new kid in October and I realized right away that people are nice to you even if you

don't know how to do things. Making friends is easy here. I had three friends by the time my first day had ended.

When you are not having class, you can play, read, or draw. You can also chitchat with friends if they don't have a class.

The class size is small, never more than six people, and sometimes as small as one student.

We also do have real classes here. Everyone takes math & language arts, music, español, and social studies.

My favorite thing about coming to this new school is that I don't have to be quiet all the time and that I can spend time with my friends during the day.

MEASURING THE THETFORD GREEN

by Lily

Last year, when I was in the 5th Grade, our math teacher, Mary, said we had to measure the Thetford Green. My classmates and I wondered what she meant by that. She couldn't have meant that we were to measure the ENTIRE GREEN! But of course, she did.

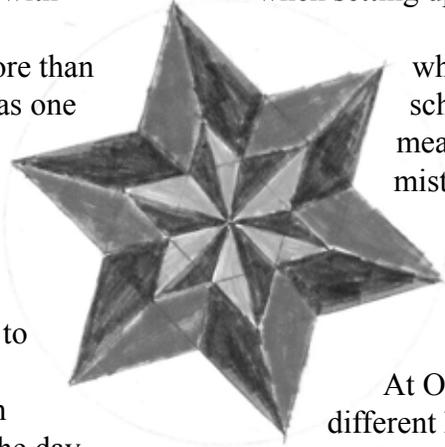
We had to measure it long ways, width ways, across ways, any kind of 'ways' you can think of. We did it every day. After math class, our hands would smell like the road, and we would get grass stains on our knees.

We mapped the interior of the Green as well, such as trees, culverts, hydrants, flag poles, telephone poles, etc. When we were measuring the trees, we even measured their widths, heights, and how wide their branches were. We meant business.

We collected all our measurements, and put them on a map. We had previously estimated the Green's shape. We found our estimation was not anywhere near the results of our measurements.

At the end of the School Year, my classmates and I got awards for our good work. The awards were tiny measuring tapes.

Measuring the Green was very



important for our school because every year in May, Open Fields holds a Medieval Festival. The Medieval Festival is one of our major fund-raising events, and we rely on accurate measurements when setting up tents and booths.

Now, thanks to my math class, when we use the Green for our school events, we will have accurate measurements and will not make mistakes.

SPECIAL OCCASIONS AT OPEN FIELDS SCHOOL

by Caitlyn

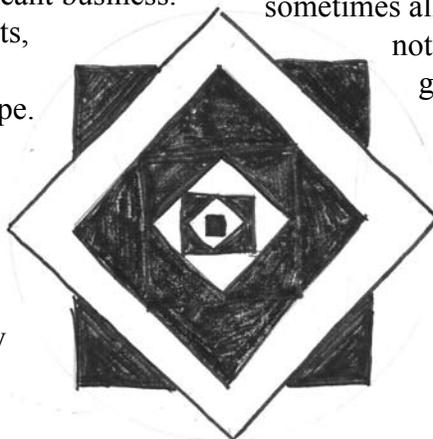
At Open Fields School, we celebrate different holidays like Chinese New Year and Cinco de Mayo, and occasionally others like Purim or Diwali. On those days we cook. We cook different foods for the different occasions like dumplings for Chinese New Year and Mexican food for Cinco de Mayo.

On these days, we set up the tables differently. We put table cloths on them and decorate. When we're done with Meeting or Sharing, we're excused, but instead of getting our lunch boxes, we go to a table that's set up and get a plate. We can choose which food we want. If we don't want any of the food, we don't have to have any. We can get our lunchboxes instead. We can also get food from the table and from our lunchboxes. After a teacher says "Cheers", we can eat!

QUIET TIME AND OUTSIDE TIME

by Gabrielle

After lunch, some people go upstairs. We are sometimes allowed to play Scratch but if we are not, then there are lots of crafts and games. You can also talk to your friends or play with Sculpey or paint. After Quiet Time, we go outside. We either go on the playground or in Matt's field.



*Math art by Kai (p. 4 top),
Caitlyn (p. 4 bottom),
Claire (top),
Lily (bottom).*

Great Goose Egg Auction

The biennial Great Goose Egg Auction moved back to the renovated Hanover Inn at a new time of year, October 23, 2014, but our artists came through with some of the loveliest, most original eggs ever!

Eggs rolled in from far and near, from well-known and not-yet-known artists. As always, our generous artists created unique interpretations, ranging from delicate flowers to whimsical creatures, from elegant birds to quirky, pun-filled works of art. Collectors and art lovers from far and near gathered for a spirited auction by our own inimitable – and eminently entertaining – Dean Whitlock.

The October auction raised over \$10,000 in support of Open Fields, and a special “step” auction raised an additional \$2,500 toward replacing the deteriorating exterior staircase.



Above, left to right: Nature's Gold (Mark Hufford); Night Owl (Naomi Simpson-Beck); Charlie's Mice Cream Stand (Jenny Wren); Eggshell China (Grace Lin). Photos by Joe Mehling.



These trees were created as a combination science and art lesson. The students studied tree silhouettes and created water color and pen and ink drawings as a personal statement.

If you haven't already done so, consider a tax-deductible gift to Open Fields.
Or, consider a memorial donation or bequest. Support local education!
The children, teachers, and parents thank you.

Yes, I want to support Open Fields School!

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please make your check payable to Open Fields School and send to Open Fields, PO Box 53, Thetford, VT 05074. Open Fields is a non-profit, alternative elementary school and a 501(c)(3) organization and all contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowable by law. Thank you for your support!

Thanks. . .to our generous friends who have contributed to Open Fields: Anonymous, Marian Abowitz, Fran Alger, Heather Alger, Peter Hoyle Armstrong, James Aull, Rebecca Siegel, Kimberly & Michael Barnhart, Mary Helen Bentley & Katrin Tchana, Peter Blodgett, Ashley Bryan, Judith Bush & Philip Bush, Bushway Agency, Jack & Dorothy Byrne Foundation, Charles & Sarah Calley, Casella Waste Management, Paige Cavanaugh, Mary & Ray Chin, John Churchill, Janet Cobb, Danielle Cohen & Stephen Pidgeon, Charles & Liz Ryan Cole, Alan & Janice Cook, Tim & Stephanie Cronan, Robert Cserr, Alice Dale Murphy & Cynthia Dale, Martha Diebold, Meredith Dobyns, Doug's Exit 19 Sunoco, Don & Deborah Downey, Martha Drake, Sally Duston, Kathleen Farrell, Nancy Feller, Folk, James Fowle, Jane Francisco & Sam Van Dam, Milt & Carolyn Frye, Bob & Pat Garrison, Stephen & Nora Gordon, Marcia Groszek & Rick Barrows, Louise Guion, Hastings Chiropractic, Hilde's Salon Vienna, Nate Hine & Nellie Pennington, Lynne Kaplowitz, Margaret & Chris Katucki, Tracey Kawecki, Bill Keegan, Kinney Pike, Joshua Kol, Susan Kowalsky, David & Lori Kraemer, Mary Layton, Jackie Levin, Joann Liddell & Robert Machin, Peg Little, Jennifer Loros & Jay Dunlap, Lyme Green Heat, Cynthia Malmquist, Mascoma Savings Bank, Marilyn McEnery, Meg McLean, Medfield Foundation, Joe Mehling, Ellen Merlis, David Millstone & Sheila Moran, Delo & Kathryn Mook, Michael O'Donnell & John Quimby, Rosamond Orford, Kate Pennington & Nick Azzaretti, Perry's Oil, Leslie Porter, Ann & Fredric Price, Jane Quimby, Anne Raiken, RE/MAX Group One, John & Elizabeth Riggs, Barbara Roby, Louise Rodriguez, Jacob Rower, Lesley Rower, BJ & Heather Ryan, Anne Sheret, Rebecca Siegel, Emily Sloan, Jennifer Snyder, Solaflect Energy, William Spademan, Linnea & Chris Spelman, Brendan Stecchini, Margaret & John Stephens, Lorraine Taft, Eugene Tchana, Katrin Tchana, Thetford Auto, Vanessa Thrall, Tirna Designs, William Tyson, Jo Valens, John & Catherine Vansant, Donlon Wade, Clyde Watson, Watson's Automotive, Wells River Savings Bank, Lilla Willey, Ann Wollock (in memory of Trina Schart Hyman) Emily Wood, Margaret Wren, Beth Young, and all those folks who shop through Amazon Smile. And thanks to students Gabrielle, Leia, Lily, and Robin, for gifts made to the school in honor of their birthdays!

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