This year was popping with rentals! We had nine weddings and 14 retreat/meeting rentals in the 2011 season. Groups from all over Vermont came to hold their board meetings, summer sales meetings, fall retreats, and more here. Where are they all coming from? Despite all the fancy marketing instruments out there, word-of-mouth continues to be our best marketing tool. We were the meeting spot for the UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture who heard about our wonderful space from VT Campus Compact, a group who held a daylong retreat in June. Outright Vermont, whose mission is to build safe, healthy, and supportive environments for LGBTQ youth (ages 13-22), also heard about us through word-of-mouth.

The Common Room in the new Eco-Lodge has been the space of choice for gatherings. Many of our members had a chance to experience the pleasure of the Common Room during summer programs or at our recent Annual Meeting. Linda Berlin, Director of the UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture, had nothing but good things to say about the day her group spent in the Common Room. As she describes it, “It was a misty, cool day in early September which normally would have been a day to hide under the covers. Fortunately, the space at Common Ground provided the comforts of home with room for a group… the peaceful nature of the grounds and building allowed us to focus on our work without distraction. We’ll definitely be back!”

It’s hard to pinpoint exactly what’s so special about the Common Room. Perhaps it is the breathable clay plaster lining the walls, the view from the large windows that also provide natural light to the room, or the locally sourced furniture and handcrafted tables and light fixtures. The red maple flooring was milled locally from our own wood and all the electricity comes from the eight solar panels you can see when you first drive up to CGC. Add internet access and some coffee and you’ve got yourself an ideal location for a day-long meeting or retreat. The radiant floor heating throughout the building provided by solar tubes and the cozy wood-stove allow us to host groups throughout the winter. We’re expecting many groups to take advantage of our trails for snowshoeing and the nearby Mad River Glen, Sugarbush, and Bolton Valley for skiing and snowboarding.

The Eco-Lodge can house up to 31 people in seven guestrooms, all with private baths. Groups requiring meals can rent our commercial kitchen or talk with our rental coordinator about what we might be able to do for you. The site is filling up fast for the winter as well as next spring and summer, so please plan ahead for weddings, family reunions, and other gatherings. Don’t hesitate to call 800-430-2667 with any questions or if you’d like to book a time for your group to come experience our magical site. Mention this article to receive a 5% discount on a deluxe wedding package!

Rates and dates have been set for 2012, and registration is open for all programs! Our early-bird special for Camp Common Ground ends December 1. Please call the office at 800-430-2667 to register. See the back cover of this newsletter for 2012 dates.
2011 in Numbers

Months spent building the Eco-Lodge: 12
Meetings held in the Eco-Lodge since its opening in April: 14

Christmas trees sold: 100

Pizzas baked in the brick oven: 21
Campers attending Family Camp: 25
Grandparents attending camp: 10
Birthday’s celebrated at Common Ground Center: 16
New families attending Family Camp: 30
Photos taken during programs: 27,315

Weddings held at the Common Ground Center in 2011: 9

Hours spent mowing grass: 336
Kilowatt hours of energy produced by solar trackers: 24,089
Countries represented by Volunteers for Peace: 5
Pounds of compost generated in an average week of camp: 242
Camperships awarded: 30

Number of times Peg sawn off while writing the morning yarn: 114
S’mores consumed by campers this summer: 928

New Programs - Save the Date!

Men’s Winter Adventure Weekend
All those hours of sitting in the creek have led to sitting around in the snow…not quite. Thanks to the warmth and comfort of the Eco-Lodge, the men of Common Ground will be spending a weekend luxuriating in the splendors of a Vermont winter. Snowshoeing, reclining in front of a fire, sharing our stories and ambitions, and a few surprises yet to be unveiled await all those man enough to brave the snow! March 2nd-4th, fees and registration information to come.

Aspiring Artists Weekend
Common Ground is proud to announce the start of a new partnership here in Vermont. For 20 years, the Vermont Craft Council has hosted the Vermont Spring Open Studio Weekend, featuring many local artists including our very own Jackie Mangione. In 2012 Common Ground is finally going to get in on the action! Memorial Day weekend (May 25-29th), CGC will be hosting aspiring artists and those who wish to learn from two talented art professionals. Surrounded by an inspiring landscape, participants will spend their mornings learning firsthand from our instructors and in the afternoon they will visit the studios of local artists from Addison and Chittenden counties. Veronica Gadbois will be teaching basic pottery workshops while Jackie Mangione will offer watercolor instruction. Please contact the office if you are interested in participating.

Special Offer:
Campers qualify for discounts on new programs!
Valid for 2012. Call the office for details.

Register today, give us a call at 1-800-430-2667!
Farewell Susanna! The Common Ground Center staff is adjusting to some changes this fall! Susanna Kellogg, Communications Coordinator since 2009, moved to Boston where she is pursuing a degree in Publishing & Writing at Emerson College. Luckily, Susanna will continue to coordinate our website part-time. We wish Susanna the best of luck in Boston!

Welcome Neily! As we bade farewell to Susanna, CGC welcomed Neily Jennings to its year-round staff in September. Neily helped manage CGC’s kitchen this summer and will continue to oversee the kitchen as our rentals pick up. She’ll spend the remainder of her time working on our publications and facilitating the work of our board of directors. Before moving to Starksboro, Neily spent four years organizing education and training events for cooperatives. When she’s not in the office or the kitchen, Neily can be found swimming in the pond, playing scrabble, or hanging out with her dog and her partner Connor, who is also on the CGC staff.

Cooperation Works! During a recent staff retreat, we decided to move to a more cooperative organizational structure. Instead of a “top-down” system, we organized our year-round staff into eleven hubs (see diagram below). The role of hubs is to hold each other accountable for accomplishing work, discuss new ideas, collaborate, and bring items to the whole staff for consideration. In a weekly staff meeting, the hubs come together and update each other on their work. We’ve also assigned ourselves peer mentors who support each other in our work. This is an experiment that will continue to change as we grow together as a staff, but so far, it seems to be working well!

Our organizational structure: eleven hubs that intersect at staff meetings

Summer Highlights by Carole Blane

I am happy to report that we had an amazing summer season, and we’re looking forward turning our attention to filling the Eco-Lodge in the colder months! I must admit, however, that I slumped into this year’s Annual Meeting on a Saturday morning feeling fairly exhausted after wrapping up the Lost Arts Week, the fifth and final program of the summer. Given how drained I felt going into the meeting, I was pleasantly surprised to leave feeling proud and rejuvenated! During the meeting, participants shared highlights of their Common Ground experience this year, and many of the highlights resonated with me.

A big highlight this year was Quidditch! Reading Harry Potter has always been a big part of camp for me and others. The year book six came out I think many of us were depressed about Dumbledore. Camp pulled us out of our doldrums. Connor Timmons brought Quidditch (the Harry Potter game of the wizarding world) from his previous camp

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Summer Highlights

Continued from page 3

experience and it was a blast. Folks of all ages played and everyone else attended. It was an event with lots of fanfare, including drumming and trumpeting. Us muggles (aka non-magical humans) ran around with swimming noodles stuck between our legs and throwing bludgers and quaffles at each other and the goal. Grace Flory, one of our most knowledgeable Harry Potter fans, made an amazing defensive play, outsmarting Deni, Lisa Warren, and Liz, who were WAY too enthusiastic about winning. The seekers chased the snitches all over camp with a grand finale catch at the end of the game. You can read more about Quidditch adventures on our blog. A big thank you to Hogwarts for loaning us their spare Quidditch equipment for the summer!

Another high point was Bruce Rodger’s birthday when he sang “When I’m 64” at lunchtime during Camp Common Ground. I remember when Bruce first came to camp and he sang a song at the Big Show that was understated yet hysterical...that is him! I knew in that moment that he was a keeper. Bruce is a member of our Board and is directing the Strategic Planning process that we are going through this fall. Getting to know Bruce has been a real treat for me.

Heidi and Marleigh, our Canadian neighbors, came to the Women’s Weekend this year. You might not realize how funny they are unless you get to spend inordinate amounts of time playing Rummikub with them. I had that pleasure. They get the “snarkiness” of our play and I am honored to sit at the table with them anytime. I taught some other folks to play Rummikub this summer, so the web is expanding. It is truly an inane game but allows for conversation and some (but not too much) stimulation of the good ole brain cells. Rummikub should give us a donation for all of the marketing we do for them. In fact, the fundraising committee needs to get on that!

I really enjoyed watching what happened with the tweens this summer at our programs. They present a unique challenge as they are not really little kids any longer but are not quite teens. So at Camp Common Ground we took them out of Kidville and gave them their own identity. They did projects all around the site: clearing trails, creating a baseball field, and painting the pink monster who lives in the baseball field. It seemed to me that they rose to the occasion and had a great summer. At Camp K, tweens were given much more freedom to explore and they took advantage of the basketball court, hiking trails, and endless board games that allowed for comfortable social discourse. At Lost Arts they helped with and learned about composting. This was the summer of composting as Jade made huge inroads into a workable system for us. Kudos and thanks to Jade!

My favorite innovation for the Chinese Culture Weekend was the addition of the gong, which we used to summon the 40 foot dragon this year. Many thanks to Rhoen and the teens who made the dragon seem so real even I was a little frightened! Connor, Elin, all of the kids and I wound up liking the gong so much that we sounded it at Lost Arts and every other chance we got. Be prepared next summer....the bell may have been usurped!

David Kirsch’s doughnuts and bubbles are always a hit! We now invite him to every orientation of every program to make bubbles, and they have become the iconic symbol of the freedom and whimsy of Common Ground. This year he introduced Donald McMonkey. Keep your eyes peeled for more from him in the future. We may be talking a movie deal!
I loved the astronomy also this year. Francis, one of our long-time favorite campers, returned this summer. Even new families speak of Francis with a twinkle in their eyes; you have to meet him to understand. Francis started building a telescope a few years ago with the help of local astronomy club members Dennis and Doug Woos and Bob Horton. But my favorite experience with them was with Dennis at Lost Arts this year. He came during the full moon! Unheard of. Why? Because Jupiter was out and we had to see it. It was the first time I’ve ever been able to “see” Dennis when out observing. He is usually just a disembodied voice speaking in the pitch black. It was cool seeing Jupiter and the moon in such detail!

I had so many people thank me for the opportunity to spend time with their families. One mom fell into my arms at Lost Arts expressing her gratitude for Common Ground and what we imbue. Oh so many connections are made at Common Ground Center. Parents bond over everything from adopting kids to homeschooling to being a stay-at-home dad. Kids bond over designing boats and making skits for the Big Show.

Every year I try to capture what makes us such a special and magical place. To me, it all boils down to the connections we all make on every level….family, ourselves, nature, and the planet. I love how the connections pervade all the programs and rentals; how we now make bubbles and view stars at each program and how Kim Dunkley and so many others staff all programs and help out at rentals. Our campers too attend multiple programs and continue to create a larger community of Common Grounders.

I must say one experience I missed this year was hiking to the new lookout on the mountain. Our 700 acres presents so many opportunities for nature exploration. Here is a great way to look out, see the world, embrace it, and work towards making it better. We sure keep trying! Come join us.
We couldn’t have

Women’s Weekend
Kim Dunkley
Elin Melchior

Camp Kaleidoscope
The Augmentative Learning and Movement Center
Margaret Novotny

Grants
The Agnes M. Lindsay Trust
Vermont Camp Association
Northfield Savings Bank

Volunteers
Susan DeLuke
Miriam Novotny
Mary Castro Summers
Parent to Parent Massachusetts
Mary Alice Favro

Organizations
Northeastern University
Emerson College
UMASS Amherst
Montclair State University
William Patterson
Boston University
University of Vermont

Family Partners
Marie Chamoun, Niki Damascus,
Samantha Downie, Chelsea Fretterd, Ruchi Gadodia, Kalli Hale, Melanie Hertan,
Valerie Hines, Tiffany Hutchins, Jackie Karpman, Shana Leiter, Kerri Liljegren,
Kelly McNamee, Sara Natale, Jennifer Pearson, Christine Scully, Kaei Sullivan,
Amanda Trainor, Katherine Wong

Camp Common Ground
Volunteers
Jade Cambron
Cy Kano
Jim Scheid

Volunteers for Peace
Daria Chernyakhovskaya
Janghee Han
Lee Jiyeon
Shuang Liang
Hind Rchich
So Yoshikawa
Lu Zhang

Telescope Builders
Vermont Astronomical Society
Bob Horton
Dennis Woos
Doug Woos
Francis Goodman

Chinese Culture Weekend
The Asian Studies Outreach Program at UVM
Volunteers
MingFen Congden
Emily Geske
Zhenrong Jin
Alia Johnson
Xin Li
Zhenyan Li
Julia Proft
Anna Rutenbeck
Lecanne Tobler
Scott Bevins

Lost Arts
Shane Bill
Ashley Satorius
Closter Nature Center
Bryn Meadow Farm
Pedro Salas of Bee Happy

Common Ground Center
Volunteers
IBM
Chris Bowers
Brian Wendel
Brian Pratt
John Allard
Jim Beecher
Jim Rainville
Jim Nye
Eric Bingham
Phil Magnant
Gary Barbour
South Burlington High School
Carly Stein
Kaitlyn Bishop

Eco-Lodge Grand Opening
Bill McKibben
David Bliddersdorf
All Earth Renewables
Steve Schubart
Lori Biamonte
Justin Bouvier
Vermont Recyclers Association
Kendra Gratton
William Pelton

The Common Good
Veronica Gadbois
Lori Biamonte
Jill Entis
Lisa Warren

Board of Directors
Jill Entis
Dew B Wilde
Lori Biamonte
John Sheridan
Rhoen Puesse-Adams
Brooks Griffith
Scott Meyer
Bruce Rodgers
Jane McGurty
Justin Bouvier
Elizabeth Lorris Ritter
Veronica Gadbois
Eliza van Rootseelaar

CGC Board and Staff wish to extend a special thanks to outgoing board members Veronica Gadbois and Eliza van Rootseelaar. We are particularly grateful to Veronica for her long service on the Board and her many hours co-founding “The Common Good,” and stocking this attractive gift shop with many of her handmade products. We look forward to seeing the fruits of her labor for years to come. And kudos to Eliza who was our first Board member from the “younger generation” that grew up at camp. Her valuable insights helped CGC to grow and prosper. We wish her luck in her post-college endeavors!
done it without YOU!

Donors
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Henry Schwartz
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The Simpson Family
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The Starr Family
The Strauss Family
The Sweeney Family
The Tobler Family

In Kind Donations
Ben & Jerry’s Ice Cream
Dawn McGinnis: GPS
United Way: Tables
Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Wish List
Cleaning out your garage? We happily accept gently used items! We’re specifically looking for:

- Snowshoes
- Baseball equipment (anything but bats)
- Complete board games, including Clue, Chutes and Ladders, Sorry, Battleship, Stratego, Candyland, Cribbage, and Backgammon
- A tea kettle
- Pots and pans
- Serving platters and bowls
- Forks and spoons
- A working push mower & chainsaw
- A wheelbarrow
- A small generator

In the next few months, you’ll be hearing from members of our staff and board during our annual Phone-a-thon. This is a time for them to find out community news, get your input and ideas, and follow-up on our end-of-year appeal letter. We are a non-profit and depend on your contribution to make our unique programming financially accessible to all. We truly appreciate your support.

For more information on donating, visit www.cgcvt.org/content/how-help or call 1-800-430-2667.

Visit us online at www.cgcvt.org!
2012 Calendar

- Men’s Retreat: March 2 - 4
- Aspiring Artists Retreat: May 25 - 29
- Women’s Weekend: TBD
- Camp Kaleidoscope: June 21 - 24
- Camp Common Ground, Week 1: July 21 - 27
- Camp Common Ground, Week 2: July 28 - August 3
- Camp Common Ground, Week 3: August 4 - 10
- Camp Common Ground, Week 4: August 11 - 17
- Chinese Culture Camp: August 20 - 23
- Lost Arts Week: September 10 - 14

Our Mission Statement: Common Ground Center is a nonprofit, multi-age arts, education, and outdoor recreation center. We are dedicated to environmental sustainability and strengthening diverse families and communities through unique program offerings and facility rentals.

Open Pages is produced twice annually by the Common Ground Center staff. Contact the office at (802) 453-2592 or e-mail us at info@cgcvt.org. Our address is 473 Tatro Rd., Starksboro, VT 05487, and our website is www.cgcvt.org.

Common Ground Center Staff
- Peg Kamens, Co-Director
- Jim Mendell, Co-Director
- Carole Blane, Program Director
- Elin Melchior, Operations Coordinator
- Kiesha Richardson, Rental Coordinator
- Neily Jennings, Communications Coordinator
- Connor Timmons, Program Coordinator
- Pat Hendee, Caretaker
- Susanna Kellogg, Website Coordinator

CGC Board of Directors
- Jill Entis, Dew B Wilde, Lori Biamonte, John Sheridan, Rhoen Pruesse-Adams, Brooks Griffith, Scott Meyer, Bruce Rodgers, Jane McGurty, Justin Bouvier, and Elizabeth Lorris Ritter

The pink monster dares you to hit a home run at Common Ground!