

## **Vermont Learning-Support Initiative No-Frills Newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 2 May 2017**

### **Parent Engagement Project (PEP):**

A first forum for middle-school families contemplating college took place at Albany Community School (ACS), a pre-K through 8 school in the Northeast Kingdom, in early April. Three college-educated community members (plus a video contribution from a pair of college-bound seniors from Albany) shared stories of their college experiences with parents and their students over salad and pizza, and also answered questions. The response was encouraging: a post-forum survey of participants indicated 90% were taking away ideas to think about. Follow-up training at ACS in home-study skills, for parents having middle-schoolers with learning challenges, is pending. Other schools in the area have responded with interest to VLSI outreach regarding PEP, and the outreach is ongoing.

A second PEP initiative is also being implemented, through which VLSI will offer free community screenings of a film on the subject of learning and attention issues, followed by discussion. Intended to raise awareness & understanding at the community level that learning differences exist in every city, town, village and hamlet in Vermont, with aspirations toward higher education as part of the discussion, the first screenings are expected to begin this summer in Kingdom communities, starting with one in Greensboro.

### **Board News:**

We are delighted to welcome Mary Cotton from Burlington to our Board of Directors! Mary, a speech/language specialist, works with high-school students to enhance social and executive-functioning skills. At her first board meeting in March, she brought her expertise into the discussion of VLSI's programming; we look forward to being beneficiaries of that input as we grow our work. Sadly, with Mary's arrival comes the departure of founding board member Tim Nisbet, but the good news is that Tim will continue in his new role as go-to advisor.

### **Fundraising Developments:**

VLSI has been selected to be the nonprofit beneficiary of all proceeds from Burlington's Main Street Landing Tuesday Night Film Series for February 2018. In addition to its potential for fundraising and friend-raising, this opportunity will help to spread the word about VLSI and its mission, and our intention is to raise awareness about learning issues throughout the month.

To boost its online fundraising, VLSI recently agreed to partner with a web funding platform on a trial basis. Part of this effort will entail an upgrade of our website, including overdue expansion into social media. While the partnership requires significant investment in time and resources, the board believes there could be substantial short- and long-term benefits.

Brad Smith, Founder & Director

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