

## The DREAM Program, Inc.

### Executive Director's Report; December 2005

First things first, DREAM has a new staff member, our sixth VISTA position the Camp Development Director has been filled by Chris Howell a 2005 graduate of Middlebury College. He has already been welcomed to the office and I think he fits in quite well. If you have a moment please send him a welcome note [chris@dreamprogram.org](mailto:chris@dreamprogram.org). Chris will be working on the long-term vision for the Camp property and its facilities.

Well, it has been a long-time coming as you all well know, but Camp DREAM finally has closed on the VHCB and VLT Conservation Easement. This was all made possible because over the past few months Camp DREAM has been given its last three necessary permits to close on the property; the Conditional Use Determination for the wetland, the Wastewater Permit for our proposed septic system and composting toilets, and the big one- Act 250! DREAM owes a huge thank you to Jesse Foote for everything he did to make these permits possible.

The closing of the property does provide DREAM with a financial opportunity as well. Due to sound fiscal management last year, the entire mortgage on the property was paid in full. This leaves DREAM with a large windfall of cash now. DREAM received a \$100,000 check from VLT to buy the land and have it placed under a conservation easement. Of this, DREAM is to pay back to VLT \$20,300 to cover their project costs, this was agreed upon during the original grant. This price is \$3,000 over the projected budget due to additional staff time needed to rewrite portions of the easement. Bob Linck at VLT said that if DREAM was in a position to cover the extra they would appreciate it, however they understood if DREAM could only pay the original projected costs. I spoke with staff about this and everyone feels it would be great to help out VLT with the cost and it would help create an even stronger relationship. Anyway, this leave DREAM with \$79,700 extra, of that I would like to keep \$15,000 in the general funds to help replace DREAM money that was spent on Camp this summer and another \$14,000 so that DREAM is comfortable going into the new year, this will help replace the shortage of the funds in the Annual Appeal. This will leave DREAM with \$50,000 to invest. My initial reaction is to place it in an investment as seed money for the Camp Capital campaign that will occur sometime over the next three years. However, there are a number of other ways to invest this money including an endowment to help create a scholarship fund for DREAM kids among other things. I have spoken with staff about this and they like the idea of investing in a capital fund. So please share your thoughts on this. I would like to get this money into an interest earning account as soon as possible.

An ongoing conversation has been occurring between DREAM and the Highgate Apartments in Barre as we move toward a partnership to bring the Norwich DREAM Program to the children of Highgate. The partnership is going to pretty exciting as DREAM is now in a position to not only bring the mentoring program to Highgate, but we are going to develop a larger partnership around this new program as we open up dialogue opportunities between the families of HG and VSAC. There is also a possibility that DREAM may assist HG in recruiting an AmeriCorps VISTA to work in the community full-time as a community outreach coordinator. This discussion is in the earliest of stages and much of it depends on whether or not DREAM can provide a VISTA to HG and if this would be a good fit for the HG Board of Directors as they continue to search for a part-time person to fill this position. Another discussion that is occurring is to assist HG in doing a community asset mapping project so that we can bring everyone to the table that provides service in one way or another to the children and families of HG. I think this could be very helpful in providing a more holistic approach to the future success of the kids. I would envision one

meeting in the beginning and then perhaps one each year to talk about current projects and share future goals and objectives so that everyone is on the same page. Susan and Barb at Highgate were very excited about this discussion.

Briefly, Local Programs; WOW! The recruiting that has occurred this year and the quality of the new mentors brought on is amazing. Every program has had a great semester and some of the big thoughts and ideas planned for the spring are great. There are plans already for High Adventures to occur at Dartmouth (a combination trip for Armory Square and Northwoods), St. Mikes, and Castleton. Speaking of Castleton, what a turn around there are eleven new mentors and they are very motivated and have made amazing strides in a short time. The same can be said for the Norwich program as they have recruited 8 to 10 new mentors (the final decision has not been made) and have been holding both DREAM and meeting very regularly. They are also very excited about working with a new group at Highgate!

So much to share but I do not want this to go on forever so two more things. First Jen and I have been talking with Chris Koliba, PhD at the University of Vermont. Chris is the co-chair of the Master of Public Administration Program and has done extensive work and research in organizational learning and systems learning. We approached him to see if he would be interested in working with DREAM recognize all of our current theories, zones of operations, policies, evaluations, etc. and to map them and provide an alignment of language and a better picture of what DREAM "is". He is meeting with the entire staff on Dec 7 over lunch to see if everyone thinks working with him would be valuable.

Second, as I have mentioned to some of you, Sarah Stefani-Good (I believe that is her full name...) has contacted DREAM seeking assistance. She is currently a student at Tufts University in Boston and want to create a mentoring organization that will work with immigrant and refugee children in Boston. Her sister was in DREAM at Dartmouth and she went on a few DREAMs with her. She really would like to start a DREAM at Tufts, but understands that we may not be able to support that fully given our current size and location. So, any support that we can provide would be appreciated by her. I would like to take this as an opportunity to envision how DREAM could support and start a program a distance from the office. I will put together my thoughts in a report and share it with the Board and staff to start the discussion. As for Tufts, we have offered assistance, but have not made any direct promises or agreements of what that assistance will be. I will forward my Tufts' thought report before the meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

Take care everyone and I look forward to meeting with you in a couple weeks!

Mike