



## The DREAM Program, Inc.

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### Birchwood DREAM Update March 2006

Greetings from DREAM!

March was a time of growth and exploration for the Champlain/Birchwood DREAM Program complete with a mentor retreat, a group trip to the Howe Caverns in New York, and plenty of adaptability and quick thinking!

March 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> saw 19 mentors and two office staff embarking upon a jam-packed retreat down to a Dartmouth Outing Club cabin in Lyme, New Hampshire. With unclear directions to the cabin in hand, the group soon found themselves challenging their teamwork and leadership skills to find their way to the cabin—mission successful. Beyond that learning experience, Elizabeth Rosen from the office offered a training on de-escalation to help with some child management techniques and the mentors focused their attentions on upcoming large events as well as recent concerns they had while working with their mentees. A Thanksgiving feast in a cabin complimented all this, where BLT sandwiches replaced the traditional turkey and the mentors were pleased to have pulled off their first self-run retreat.

Amidst the regular Friday group and individual programming, the mentors decided to postpone their trip to New York City until next fall, when they can get better prepared to pull off a flawless trip that will really broaden the mentees' understanding of different cultures and experiences. They put a lot of effort into finding a positive, safe space for the group to stay, but ended up feeling they'd like to be more comfortable and confident with their plans before they take the kids on such an adventurous experience.

Instead the group traveled to the Howe Caverns, a slightly more local and contained location that everyone loved! Bookended by 10 hours on the bus, the trip was a huge success with an amazing tour through the caverns and their stalactites and stalagmites, a highly structured bus experience, and a phenomenally active game of Everyone's It Tag! The group even got to meet office staffer Chad Butt's parents, too.

Plans for Birchwood Beautification day on April 8<sup>th</sup> are well underway. The greater majority of the materials and work time have been donated by community members, Champlain College mentors and their friends, Champlain mentor families, DREAM office staff, and Milton and Burlington businesses. Vermont State Housing Authority has also volunteered to change the timing of when they would normally bring in their dumpsters to coincide with the Beautification Day, at the same time wishing there could be more dumpsters to really clean out the extra items lying around the community. Everyone should feel welcome to participate and get involved in any way they can!

Amidst all these big projects they continue to focus on their mentor/mentee relationships. The mentors decided to attempt a few very structured Fridays with a variety of activities that the pairs could rotate through during DREAM time—playdough making, floor hockey, arts & craft activities,



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and more! The activities met with mixed success, but really helped the kids focus in on their task and helped the mentors be able to manage the mentees more successfully.

As always, you can look back at past monthly reports or other programs' reports by going to:  
[http://www.dreamprogram.org/documents/Local\\_Programs/Program\\_Reports/Monthly\\_Reports/\\_Web/](http://www.dreamprogram.org/documents/Local_Programs/Program_Reports/Monthly_Reports/_Web/).  
And please, do not hesitate to contact us with questions or ideas.

Keep DREAMin'  
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