



ROCK POINT SCHOOL

Become Your Best Self

VIEWPOINTS

FALL/WINTER 2019

One Rock Point Road, Burlington, Vermont 05408

802.863.1104

www.rockpointschool.org

Dear Friends of Rock Point School,

Every Tuesday morning, after having breakfast with our students, I have the honor of leading our Reflections meeting. Still somewhat sleepy-eyed, students take a comfortable seat around our library, and we discuss topics from spirituality, to treating all people with dignity, to how our own stories shape us. We ask big questions: *Who do you want to be? What is important in your life? How do we grapple with the challenges of being alive in a turbulent time?* These are not questions we'll be able to answer before they head to their first class, but it is a place to start.

In November, we read Truman Capote's poignant "A Thanksgiving Visitor," in which Capote masterfully describes a large Thanksgiving gathering. Buddy, the story's seven-year-old protagonist, makes a public action to get back at a bully who relentlessly and severely hurt Buddy. Afterwards Buddy's older relative both consoles and admonishes him. With her arm around his shoulder, she says "Now listen to me, Buddy: there is only one unpardonable sin—deliberate cruelty. All else can be forgiven. That, never. Do you understand me, Buddy?"

Reflecting on the story, students grappled with the ideas about choosing to do the right thing. A student pointed out that of course there was a personal history that explained the bullying, but that did not excuse it. We left the conversation pondering how to continue to choose kindness and love when we feel the heat of anger and our own pain? One choice at a time. Every day, in one form or another—through our dorm programming, classes, advising—we move towards kindness, forgiveness, generosity, joy, and laughter, while acknowledging harder feelings and sorting them out. In a stressful and, at times, vitriolic world, Rock Point remains a place to be kind and loving.

During this holiday season, and every season, we thank you for being a part of this uplifting and hopeful community. Your presence and generosity are essential to our continued success.

Sincerely,

C.J. Spirito, Head of School



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Visiting Artist Brings the Desert Vermont

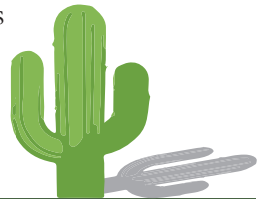


Vermont-native artist Kate Long Hodges visited RPS this fall to work with students on a textile art piece inspired by nature.

Kate Long Hodges grew up in Vermont and has a soft spot for the Green Mountains, despite living in the Sonoran Desert of Arizona for the last decade. Last year while visiting Vermont, she spoke with her longtime friend and Rock Point School art teacher, Jean Waltz, about collaborating on a project that would unite the beauty of both places. The two began planning a project with Rock Point students that came to life this fall.

Kate has been learning textile art with members of the Tohono O'odham tribe in Arizona. When she came to Rock Point in October, she brought materials from the desert such as prickly pear cactus, agave thorns, and earth pigments to teach students how to dye textiles with these natural sources. Students used the dye on recycled fabric made from cotton, silk, and linen. "I thought it was amazing that all that vibrant color came from a desert plant, because the desert is usually thought of as sort of colorless," said Amaris, a RPS junior. "It's awesome what you can create from nature."

Before Kate arrived, students gathered materials from the Rock Point property to add to the piece. The class enjoyed a mini archaeological dig and found old bottles, pieces of China, metal, and even pieces of a leather boot in the places where Rock Point discarded trash years ago. Kate helped students arrange their newly dyed textiles and their found materials into a beautiful completed piece that now hangs above the fireplace in Hayden Lounge.



SHOWCASING THE FLYNN IN OUR CURRICULUM



Congressman John Lewis and Andrew Aydin spoke about the civil rights movement, past and present, at the Flynn Center for Performing Arts. Photo courtesy of Vermont Humanities Council.

Through our partnership with the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts in Burlington, we are lucky to take part in many student matinee performances throughout the course of the school year. For over fifteen years, our students have been seeing shows at the Flynn—from Chinese acrobats, to Shakespeare, to Symphony orchestras—and we love that we can share the excitement and impact of the performing arts with our students. Because we want our students to have meaningful experiences attending these performances, we commit to selecting rich material, and preparing the students with lessons before the show, and debriefing after.

This year, the student matinee program has provided us with shows that tackle challenging issues of history, culture and social justice, and we have designed lessons and hosted discussions to complement them. The three shows that have provided the richest learning for our students include Congressman John Lewis's *March*, The National Players' Performance of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and *The Normal Heart* by Larry Kramer, performed this fall by UVM's theatre department. In each of these performances, we meet characters living in particularly difficult and scary times in history. And, in each piece, the characters rise above their circumstances to find hope, to love those around them, and to fight in their way for a more just world.

To prepare for seeing John Lewis speak about his graphic

novel and his life of civil rights work, students read *March* in History class, then discussed how the story of Civil Rights Activists related to the issues facing them today. They drew connections to both current issues of race, as well as the climate crisis and the march they participated in during the Climate Strike in September. Many students were familiar with Anne Frank's story, but they prepared in History class by learning more about her life, and in English class by discussing how a diary is similar to, and different from, a memoir. Our discussions of the play centered around how one lives their life, and keeps their joy, in a time of such terror and darkness. Finally, in preparation for *The Normal Heart*, students were introduced to the key events and people who rose to the challenge of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s. They learned about ACT UP and the challenges that the gay community faced in gaining attention and help in fighting AIDS, and they viewed the 2012 documentary "How To Survive a Plague." Students agreed the play was one of the best they'd seen, and that the story of this time in America should be taught more widely.

We are proud to offer our students opportunities to grapple with these difficult subjects, and to experience through theater the profundity of people working together to change the world. We will continue to look for opportunities such as these, and look forward to more curriculum inspired by the Flynn Student Matinees.

Time in the OUTDOORS

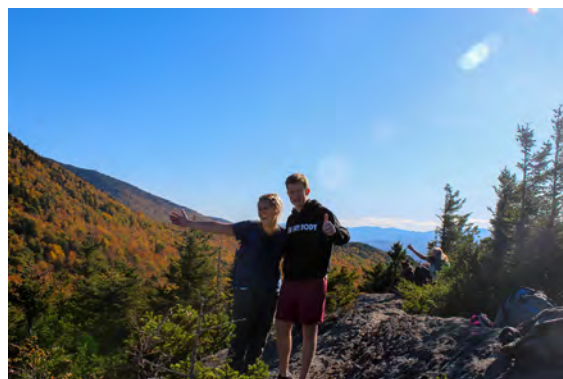
By Zachary Whiting, Residential Educator

One of the things that drew me to Vermont was the mountains. They watch over the state from high above the towns we call home. They also serve as a place to recharge, clear your mind and make connections with others and the natural world.

This fall at Rock Point School, we were able to get out into the mountains and other places in nature around Burlington. Starting off the year with a camping trip is our first dive into the outdoors, and then we fill the year with outdoor sports classes and weekend activities. These experiences create many memorable moments, such as roasting things over the campfire or eating spicy food on top of a mountain. Getting outside, especially camping and hiking, creates ways for the students to interact without technology and form close friendships.

Our students often arrive at Rock Point School with a relationship to the outdoors already. Some students come from a wilderness therapy background and a huge set of skills to be competent in the outdoors. This experience allows us to give them a lot of responsibility on camping trips and have them be an integral part of making the full operation happen, helping to build their confidence and independence. While we love having students be experts during outdoor adventures, part of our job as residential educators is helping students see the outdoors through other lenses that aren't strictly therapeutic. While it is such a powerful place for therapy, it is important that teenagers can see the natural world as a place for discovery, play, and relaxation as well.

I'm looking forward to lots of time outside with students this winter. Sledding, skiing and snowboarding, and building snow sculptures are just a few ways our students will find joy in being outdoors, even in the cold weather.



Top to bottom: Sledding at school; Hiking trip to Silver Lake; View from the top of Stowe Pinnacle.

Announcing a Matching Campaign for the 2019-2020 Tomorrow Fund

I am thrilled to announce that we have a benefactor who invites you to join us this school year to take Rock Point School's Tomorrow Fund to new heights! This year, any increase in your giving will be double matched. For example, if last year you gave \$200 and this year you give \$350, our benefactor will double match your extra \$150 with another \$300, and the value to Rock Point School of your Tomorrow Fund contribution will be \$650.

Over the past year, contributions like yours have:

- Enhanced our technology infrastructure with innovative software and hardware. This allows for enhanced yet safe, academic, artistic, and social-cultural online experiences for our students.
- Introduced new enrichment opportunities and internships to foster curiosity, develop work skills, and support individualized transition planning as students prepare for life after Rock Point School.
- Sustained our 1:1 close support of students through our long-standing student and staff advising program.

If you have already given to our appeal this year, thank you very much! If you have not donated, please consider giving this year by sending a check in the enclosed envelope, donate online through our website, or call us and contribute by credit card over the phone.

Also, if you would like to make a pledge and pay over the next 6 months, we can arrange that plan with you. All gifts for this fiscal year need to be donated by June 30, 2020. Feel free to contact C.J. Spirito, Head of School, if you have any questions. 802-863-1104 x126; cspirito@rockpoint.org

Rev. Ledlie I. Laughlin, Jr. Honors Rock Point School with a Bequest

Rev. Ledlie I. Laughlin, Jr., long-time friend and supporter of RPS, named Rock Point School in his will, leaving a generous donation to the School. We have long appreciated his friendship, intelligence, humor, caring for so many. Ledlie had a good sense of humor and a great chuckle.

When he was the rector of Grace Church in New Jersey, Ledlie had an early connection with the first Head of Rock Point School: Headmistress Doris Wright. In this parish, Ledlie supported many people challenged by poverty and oppression due to race. He made a practice of sending girls who would benefit from attending RPS to Doris.

Later, Ledlie came to be the interim Dean for St. Paul's, where some of us at the School were able to meet him. He had an unconditional positive antenna—when people spoke with him, he was 100% present for them. He gave out spellbinding sermons. He did not use notes; he just spoke in a way that everyone in the room thought he was talking directly to them with insight and sincerity.

Ledlie never stopped serving others. After he retired, he spent some of his time reading books on tape for the blind. Ledlie lived life in a way that we aspire to live at Rock Point School. His bequest is an honor and a huge support.

If you would like more information about how you could support Rock Point with a bequest, please contact C.J. Spirito.



Rev. Ledlie I. Laughlin, Jr.

The following donors generously gave to our 2018-2019 Tomorrow Fund

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Students bike across the Winooski River.

TOMORROW FUND

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A senior with her self portrait.

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Students take photos around the state in the photography elective class.

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 St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Bennington, VT
 Trinity Episcopal Church Women, Rutland, VT

Thank you!

THE MISSION OF ROCK POINT SCHOOL is to provide a small, supportive, educational community for young people, where they can become successful students and learn skills for living in a community with peers and adults. The school is committed to providing academic, cultural, spiritual, and recreational opportunities to accomplish these goals.





ROCK POINT SCHOOL

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VIEWPOINTS



ROCK POINT SCHOOL is a co-educational boarding and day high school located on 125 acres of wooded lakefront property in Burlington, Vermont. Rock Point is an alternative high school that focuses on educating the whole person. In our small classes and cohesive community, students form close relationships with teachers and peers and often grow in ways they never would have thought possible. Whether in the classroom, on the playing field, or out in the wider community, our mission is to help young people become their best selves.