



Soar Newsletter

It's back! We are very excited to announce the return of the Soar Learning Center Newsletter after an extended absence. We will be publishing four issues over the course of the 2022-2023 school year. Enjoy!

Summer/Early Fall, 2022

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2022 Summer Program At a Glance...



As we get back into the swing of things and embark on another school year here at Soar Learning Center, we want to highlight some of the successes that occurred during the recent Summer Program. This year's program provided our elementary and high school students an opportunity to gain academic credit, explore vocational opportunities and get involved within the local community. Students were able to receive individualized programming due to low attendance, providing opportunities for relationship building while celebrating summer, and staff demonstrated flexibility while adapting to daily weather reports to make these experiences possible.

Students from the elementary and high school programs were able to gain academic credit in various ways thanks to the creative approach teachers incorporated in their respective subjects. Aside from the typical mathematics that needed to be done such as Kahn academy and worksheets, students calculated the mileage driven and gas prices when the vans went out into the community. Science classes engaged in various learning opportunities at the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, while History classes engaged in worksheets on field trips to the St. Albans Museum. English class required a daily reading journal on a book of the student's choice. The reading log proved to challenge students' understanding

of the material. Overall, academics were approached in a way to provide students with opportunity to further test their knowledge in a way that was unique and exciting.

Our students really challenged themselves with new experiences throughout the summer with on and off campus activities. While on campus, students engaged in activities such as wiffle ball, classroom dance parties, bike riding, fishing at the St. Albans Bay, board games during inclement weather and everyone's favorite, Nitro Ball! Out in the community, many of our students partook in new activities such as mini golf, driving range, batting cages, bowling, and Get Air in Williston. Students participated in many outdoor explorations throughout the community such as Colchester Pond, Hard'Ack and Red Rocks Park. In addition, elementary and high school programs went to Alburgh Dunes and Niquette Bay State Park, respectively, for fun beach days. Elementary students capped their summer off by taking a cruise on the Spirit of Ethan Allen, while High school students went kayaking and canoeing at Vermont Canoe and Kayak. These experiences provided staff and students many opportunities to learn more about each other and share some laughs along the way.

High school students were able to explore various employment opportunities throughout the local community. Staff and students spent a day in Burlington, exploring the Church Street Marketplace and taking a tour of local snowboarding staple Burton Snowboards. Students received a demonstration of the start to finish snowboard making process, asking questions and engaging with staff and petting the staff's dogs who greeted folks around the warehouse. Another day, students got to learn the process of how to make a record, from start to finish, at the Burlington Records shop. These experiences provided opportunities for high school students to explore employment possibilities as they enter the workforce in the coming months.

All in all, what a summer! The individualized programming turned out to be fantastic; from the rainy in-house days to the fun explorations out in the community, these experiences proved to be vital for staff and students to learn more about one another, which is paramount as continue on another long but exciting school year. Staff couldn't be prouder of the perseverance and curiosity students demonstrated in this year's summer program, and we hope to keep this momentum throughout the fall!

Staff Interview: Mr. Bombard



Recently, one of our high school students had the opportunity to sit down with Michael Bombard, the Program Director at Soar Learning Center, and ask him some questions.

How long have you worked at Soar?

I have worked at Soar for 19 years, but I have worked at the agency (NCSS) for a total of 33 years.

What made you want to work at Soar?

Before I worked at Soar, I was a part of Upward Bound, working with high school students. When I heard about the opportunity to work at Soar, I thought it sounded similar to Upward Bound, and I knew that I enjoyed the chance to work with other students in a similar capacity.

Do you have a favorite memory from working here over the years?

One that stands out is the graduation ceremony from 2012. We lost power the morning of the ceremony unexpectedly. Luckily, all the staff worked quickly together, and we were able to move the whole ceremony outside and continue on with the proceedings as if nothing had changed. It really demonstrated how well and efficiently the staff work together as a team. It was after that that we considered having graduation outdoors from then on.

Another stand out memory is the time that I was in one of the back fields, and a Texas Longhorn (cow) wandered over from one of the neighboring farms and approached me! That was a little bit exciting...

Where did you grow up?

I was born and raised right here in St. Albans, but I have also lived in Burlington and Boston. If I had the choice, I would maybe live somewhere in the Pacific Northwest, in Ireland, or in Scotland.

Can you tell me something about your family?

My mother was born in Italy, and managed to live through the events of World War II, including the bombing and destruction of the school she attended. Later on, she met my father while he was in the Navy on board the *USS Lake Champlain*.

What did you want to be when you were growing up?

When I was young, I started out wanting to be the Captain of the *Starship Enterprise*. Then, as I got older, I also had dreams of being a football player, a scientist, and a psychologist.

The first job I ever had was a paper route. I would have to get up at 4:30 in the morning to deliver the Burlington Free Press around the city.

What was the first car you ever had?

It was a 1975 Buick Regal. It was burgundy with a landau top and a crank sunroof. I loved that car.

What is your favorite food?

It really depends on my mood on that particular day. I like to try many different foods, including spicy dishes. I think everyone should try every food at least once for the experience. However, I know for sure that I do not like pigs' feet, which I decided to try in Italy.

If you could have any job other than this one, what would you want to be?

There are several jobs that I think I would enjoy. It would be fun to be in a rock band or maybe a band publicist. I would enjoy being a professional athlete or even the General Manager of a professional sports team. It would also be great to be a ninja (haha). If I could choose the ultimately best job, I would be Santa Claus.

What is your favorite ice cream flavor?

I love most varieties of Ben and Jerry's, but my overall favorite flavor is chocolate chip cookie dough.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I really enjoy playing golf. I recently bought a drum set and like playing when I can, but it is difficult to find time to practice. I also enjoy listening to music, reading, and trying new restaurants. I hope to start skiing again soon.

If you could be any animal, which would you be and why?

I think I would like being a friendly dog who lives in a nice house with a nice owner. Doesn't that sound good? I wouldn't want to be a cat, though- kitty litter is gross. Maybe a bird as well, since they can fly.

Finally, would you rather deal with a shark attack, or a zombie apocalypse, and why?

I think I would rather deal with a zombie apocalypse because I feel like I would have a better chance at surviving. There would be opportunity to prepare and strategize. With a shark attack, it happens without warning, and it is over just as quickly as it starts.

Ropes Course Back in Action



Eleven years ago, Soar Learning Center became one of an ever-growing number of schools with an on-campus ropes course. Due to Covid-19 and other factors, it hadn't gotten much use for a while. Fortunately, Soar staff decided it was time to dust off the cobwebs and get it ready in time for school to start.

Students and faculty combined forces last year during Green Up Day to clean up the various elements of the course as well as the trails connecting them. The entire course was inspected for safety, and the Project Adventure organization trained staff on facilitation. By the start of the 2022-2023 school year, it was ready for use.

The course itself includes the Team Triangle, Spider Web, Ants on a Log, Whale Watch, Lava Walk, Nitro Swing, and Mohawk Walk elements, each with its own benefits and challenges. Some elements are more physically-involved than others, but they all include problem-solving components designed to encourage people to work together creatively and connect as a team. There are various ways to use each element, so students can be challenged in new and imaginative ways throughout the school year using the same course. Elements can even be adapted and used for academic purposes!

Project Adventure provided two full days of training to about a dozen clinicians, teachers, administrators, and behavioral staff to ensure that the course can be used to its maximum potential. "Challenge by

choice” is a cornerstone of the program that assures participants that they’ll be able to share in the fun no matter what their comfort levels may be and feel supported while doing so. This inspires them to set personal goals and rise to meet challenges, knowing they’ll be able to pause, back off, or try again as needed.

Ropes course programs have advantages for almost everyone, but students at Soar especially benefit. Adventure programming helps students learn to work together, develop trust, learn when to lead and when to follow, communicate effectively, improve coordination and agility, increase self-confidence, and connect with the natural world around them. Additionally, it gives them a break from their desks and takes them outside for fun with their classmates.

Marc Brunelle, a teacher at Soar who has been involved with the training and use of the ropes course for years, values the versatility of the course on our campus. He especially enjoys the Team Triangle element because there are a lot of fun variations that can be done on it. He appreciates that the ropes course helps our students “where they need it most,” encouraging them to communicate, collaborate, and focus while having fun.

Students love having opportunities to use the course. “I like the challenge of it,” said CDi, a student who has already been able to use the course a few times this school year. Another student, KKr, loves the Lava Walk in particular, stating, “I love the teamwork and that you have to use strategy.”

It’s hard *not* to be excited about our on-campus ropes course. Whether students and staff use it for academic activities, team building, as a treat to get the students active outside, or for fun school festivities, the course is ready for them to take full advantage!

Students Giving Back: Community Collaborative Project

One of Soar Learning Center’s newest teachers is already taking flight with a classroom project geared at helping students give back to the community. Ms. Champagne, or Ms. C as she is affectionately called by her students, has started a special project in her middle school classroom that helps empower students to volunteer their time and talents to make a difference in the world around them.

Everything is done collaboratively as students brainstorm ideas and explore their talents. After open discussions where every idea is heard and considered, the class votes on the ideas that seem the most fun, helpful, and practical. First up? Making freshly baked cookies and building birdhouses for the elderly.

Students work to meet academic and behavioral goals in order to participate in the fun activities that include choosing supplies and recipes, building birdhouses, decorating them, and baking the cookies. Soon they will get to take their handmade goodies to a local nursing home and spread some autumn cheer!

The program has already inspired students and staff alike. GMo, one of Ms. C’s sixth graders, has shown pride in their progress. His favorite contribution to the project so far has been constructing the birdhouses because he likes to work with his hands. He feels it’s important to care for people and “give them joy.”

Ms. C, who enjoys volunteering and getting involved in local events, hopes her students see that they, too, can have a positive impact on society. “The collaboration part is big,” she said with a smile, adding that it is important for young students to learn to “spread kindness.” In fact, Ms. C hopes that the Community Collaboration Project grows to include more students with even more ideas on how to give back to their Soar community as well as the St. Albans community.

Even though the project is in its infancy, the students are proud of their accomplishments so far. It hasn’t always been easy. GMo said figuring out the financial aspect has been challenging, and his classmate, TSt, added that it can sometimes be difficult having the self-discipline to meet the academic and behavior requirements to participate. However, to Ms. C and the students of her classroom, the project has certainly been rewarding and fun. They plan to continue working hard together to meet their goals of community service. According to TSt, “Community is better with more people positively contributing.” We couldn’t have said it better ourselves.

Staff Recipes



MOHEGAN SUCCOTASH

4 ears of fresh sweet corn

3 to 4 cups of fresh lima beans (frozen may be substituted)

1 ½ cups of water

½ cup of butter (to be really authentic, you should use bear grease instead of butter)

1 ½ cups of sliced green onions

1 green and 1 red bell pepper, sliced and diced

With a large, sharp knife cut corn cobs into 1 ½ inch lengths. Place corn, beans, water, and butter (or bear grease) in a large saucepan. Salt and pepper to taste.

Cover and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer for 10 minutes. Stir in green onions and peppers and continue to simmer for 6 to 10 minutes, until beans are tender and peppers are tender-crisp. Remove lid and cook over high heat for 3 to 4 minutes, until liquid is reduced to about ½ cup.

About bear grease: bears were often hunted and their skins were tanned using a mixture of animal brains, bird livers, and fish oil. In addition, bear grease was applied directly to the body and in this way provided additional warmth in the winter and in the summer it served as an insect repellent.

ABENAKI THREE SISTERS SOUP

Three Sisters (Wawicakasotijik)

Adebakwal – Skamonal – Wasawal

Like many cultures around the world the Abenaki celebrated a harvest festival in the fall. The “Three Sisters” would be ready for the feasts of this time. Much has been documented about the planting and importance of the three plant types and importance of their cultivation to food supplied worldwide. This is a simple preparation that may have been used for generations.

1 Cup Wild or Brown Rice (Menomenal),

3 Cups Soup Stock – Chicken or Vegetable (Gez8bo),

2 Cups Beans – Pinto, Red Kidney, Black, White, Pink, or any other type (Adebakwal),

2 Cups Corn – fresh (Skamonal),

2 Cups Squash, cut into 1” cubes (Wasawal),

1/4 Cup Sunflower (Gizosk8ganal) Oil (or Butter) (Wiz8wibemi),

Salt (Ziwan) to taste. The verb “to add Salt” is Ziwanahigamek).

DIRECTIONS:

- 1. Traditionally, a pot would always be at the fire with something boiling in it. A soup stock of vegetables, fowl, and other game would be constantly simmering, waiting for the addition of new ingredients. For this recipe a store-bought chicken or vegetable broth can be used in place of a homemade stock.*

2. *Heat the stock in a large pot until boiling, and salt to taste. Add the rice to the boiling stock, stir, cover, and reduce heat to allow the rice to be steamed.*
3. *Traditionally wild rice but any natural, long grain brown or wild rice will do. These kinds of rice take longer to cook so be patient. Check occasionally to make sure the heat is not too hot. In about 20-30 minutes the rice will have absorbed most of the stock during the cooking process.*
4. *Stir in the beans, corn, and squash. Cover and continue to heat for 20-30 minutes. Check occasionally to see if the rice is fully cooked and salt to taste. When the rice is fully cooked add sunflower oil (or butter) – fluff rice before serving. Serve hot as a side or main dish – Serves 6-10*

Beef Stew

Ingredients

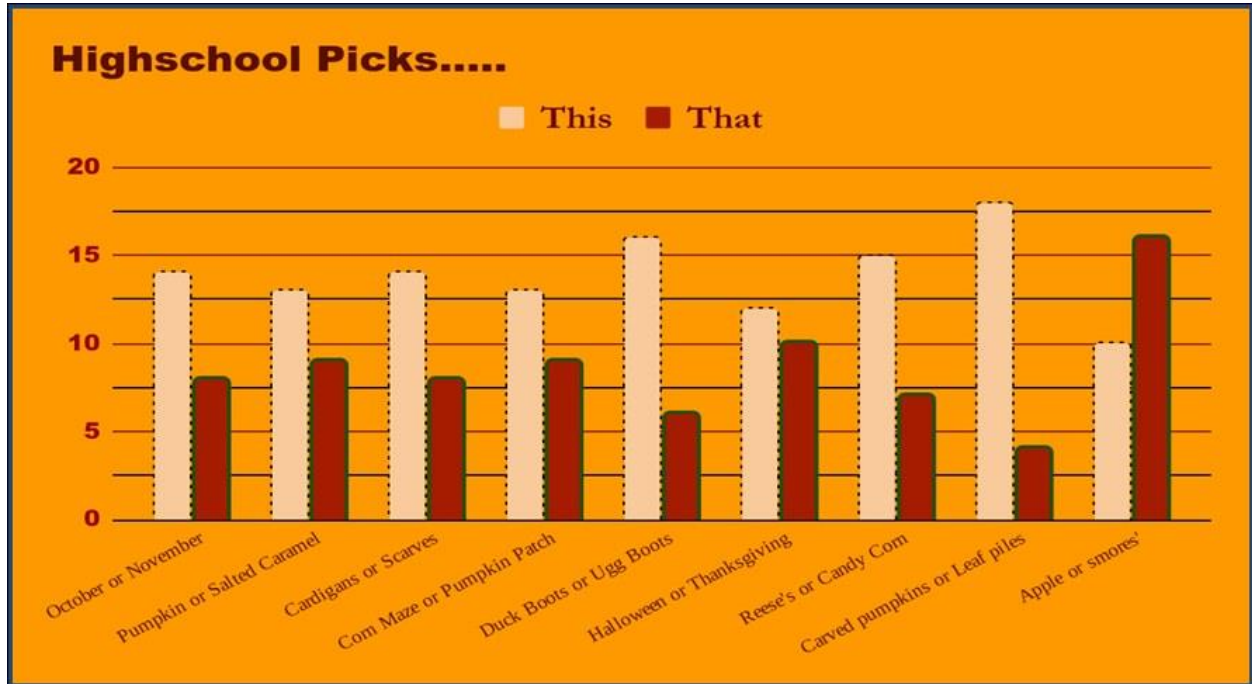
- *1/4 cup flour*
- *1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper*
- *1 lb beef (trimmed and chopped)*
- *5 teaspoons veggie oil*
- *3 1/2 cups beef broth*
- *1 medium onion, peeled & cubed*
- *3 large potatoes, peeled and cubed*
- *2 teaspoons salt*

Instructions:

1. *combine flour and pepper in a bowl. Toss beef and cover to coat all pieces.*
2. *Heat 3 teaspoons oil in large pot.*
3. *Add beef a few at a time. DO NOT over crowd.*
4. *Cook until browned on all sides (5 minutes ish) add more oil as needed.*
5. *Remove beef from pot and 1/2 cup of beef broth.*
6. *Cook over medium - high heat, scraping the pan to loosen the brown bits.*
7. *Re-add beef and remaining beef broth. (Add water if needed to make sure most of the stew is covered)*
8. *Bring to a boil then reduce to a simmer before adding vegetables and potatoes.*
9. *Season with salt and pepper as you like.*
10. *Cover and let simmer for 1 and a half hours.*

Student Poll: This or That?

Each issue, students from around the school will be circulating surveys to be completed by students and staff alike. Here are the results of the first such poll.



Student Artwork





Upcoming SLC Events

Indigenous People's Day (no school)- Monday, October 10th

Unity Day- Wednesday, October 19th

SLC Open House- Thursday, October 27th

Staff In-Service (no school)- Friday, October 28th

Halloween Celebration- Monday, October 31st