Men’s Winter Adventure Weekend  
by Jim Mendell & Connor Timmons

Common Ground Center has focused on strengthening families for the last 18 or so years. We recently launched a new program that focuses on an important element that is often overlooked when people think about strong families: healthy men. Men’s Winter Adventure Weekend, which was held this March 2-4, created a space for men to spend time reflecting on their evolving roles within their families & broader communities.

Twelve men were in attendance ranging in age from 21 to 70 at this inaugural year of the Men’s Weekend. We had a blast hanging out in the Eco-Lodge, hiking to the viewpoint and playing poker. There was no shortage of deep conversation and hearty laughter!

We took 400 photos over the course of three days, and we thought we’d share our favorites with you. We hope they inspire you or the men in your family to attend in 2013!

The highlight on Saturday was a long hike on CGC trails.

Steve & Tyler enjoy a friendly game of chess.

Connor and Lyell enjoy the view from the Hogback Mountains.

Lounging in the Common Room was an important part of the weekend!
Groups have come out of the woodwork to spend time at Common Ground Center during our first winter in the Eco-Lodge! We’ve been thrilled to host an array of events out of our new facility ranging from our very own CGC board meeting to a “Fiber Femmes” fiber arts retreat and even a winter wedding. The Eco-Lodge is perfect for groups looking to retreat from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and reconnect with each other.

The Lodge and its surroundings are an ideal respite for any group. Anne Lika, a member of a women’s hiking group that spent the weekend here this winter, explains: “Winter hiking in January on the marked trails allowed us the opportunity to get together in a beautiful setting. The lodge offered a lovely place to relax and connect while sitting in front of the fire. The bedrooms were warm, cozy and we felt pampered snuggling under the down comforters...we all left feeling renewed!”

Lonnie Poland of Milton, VT, hosted a Women’s Relax & Renew Yoga Retreat in the Eco-Lodge this February. One feature that the thirteen aspiring yogis from around Vermont truly appreciated was the radiant floor heating: their hands and feet stayed nice & warm as they practiced yoga throughout the weekend. During down time, some women explored the site, while others opted to chat and work on their knitting. A special touch that was well received by the participants was a chocolate fondue night! Lonnie is already talking about returning with her group next year.

With rooms that sleep up to 31, the Eco-Lodge is also great for youth and university groups looking to get away for the weekend. Eighteen members of University of Vermont’s Hillel held their leadership retreat in the Lodge in January. They brought in food for meals, which they prepared using the kitchen facilities in the Common Room. They even...
brought their own bedding to help keep the costs within their budget. We’re looking forward to hosting the Addison County Teens in April who will use the space in a similar fashion.

The Common Room is also a great space for a day event. The CGC Board held its winter meeting in the Common Room. Everyone agreed that the Common Room’s abundant sunlight and comfy furniture made it a great setting for a productive day. We were also host to the winter Vermont Camping Association (VCA) meeting. All the attendees gathered in a circle around the wood stove, sharing news from their camps and discussing marketing ideas while sipping coffee and nibbling snacks. In the afternoon, members got together for a walking tour of the Center to stretch their legs. Everyone had a great time!

If you’re interested in using our facilities, let us know. Availability in the Lodge is going fast for the spring, summer and fall, so please plan ahead for weddings, family reunions and other gatherings. Don’t hesitate to call 800-430-2667 with any questions or if you’d like to book a time for your group to come experience our magical site.

Participants from any of our programs are eligible for a 5% discount on site rentals!

Join us May 19 for a Volunteer Day!

This May 19 from 10 am - 4 pm, we’re welcoming volunteers of all ages to roll up their sleeves and do trail maintenance and plant our vegetable garden.

We’ll also be giving tours, so this is a great opportunity for new families or potential renters to check out our site. If you know someone who might be interested, please feel free to invite them! This event is free and open to the public. Lunch will be provided.

Please RSVP to Connor at connor@cgcvt.org or reach him at the office at 802.453.2592.
We’ve confirmed many of our program staff for this season...here is just a taste of what you can expect this summer!

Calia Marshall, Dance

Jackie Mangione, Watercolors

Alice & Sam Silverman, Communication; Singing

Charlie Cunningham, Chef

Marc Kornbluh, Glass Bead-Making

Martha Siegel, Chamber Music

Michael Albert, Pop-Art

Cai Xi Silver, Chinese Culture

Kim Dunkley (foreground), Jill of All Trades

Kerrie Bodendorf, Bodywork

Lori Biamonte, Kitchen Coordinator

Stay tuned to our website for a more complete listing of our spectacular staff!

Don’t miss out on our amazing programs! Registration is open!
Lots to Look Forward to in the Months Ahead!

Camp Kaleidoscope
Celebrating Families on the Autism Spectrum

Camp Common Ground
Our Signature Week-Long Family Camp

“Hanging” Out

Chinese Culture Camp
Join Us for Cultural Fun!

Aspiring Artists Retreat
Local Studio Tours & Art Instruction
*Beginners welcome!*

Teens :)

The Lost Arts Week
Homeschoolers Learn Time-Honored Skills

Pizza!

The Women’s Weekend
Fun, Chocolate, and Rummikub®!

Programs are filling up fast! Reserve your space today!

Visit us online at www.cgcvt.org!
We wanted to let you all know what we’ve been doing around the creation of our strategic plan and visions for the future. Bruce Rodgers, our Board Vice President, has experience with strategic planning, so he facilitated a strategic planning process beginning last July. First, he surveyed the Common Ground community, asking people to analyze the organization’s strengths and weaknesses and give input on our strategic direction. Bruce synthesized all of the information and facilitated a full-day meeting in which staff and board members had the opportunity to process the information and brainstorm key objectives.

A smaller task force composed of a few board and staff members along with the Co-Directors organized those objectives into nine strategic goals, which then went back to the staff and board for further input and eventual approval. To say it was a big endeavor is an understatement, and I for one was impressed by all the time and energy that people were willing to dedicate to the process!

The nine (ambitious!) goals, edited for brevity are (drumroll, please…):

1. Achieve a balanced budget by the end of our fiscal year 2014. This means we will break even and revenue will be equal to or exceed expenses.
2. Establish clear and concise policies as they relate to programs, rentals and administration by December 2012.
3. Document all systems from mechanical to human by December 2012 (this includes creation and maintenance of manuals, policies, calendars, etc.).
4. Create a system for maintenance, conservation, and stewardship of our property, equipment and buildings by December 2012.
5. Fill all four weeks of Camp Common Ground with a waiting list by December 2014.
6. Establish rental, program and partnership directions that can increase income while remaining true to our mission and values.
7. Encourage better Board participation and support, improve communication, and clearly define board roles by October 2012.
8. Create and design a marketing plan for Common Ground Center’s endeavors, including programs, rentals, weddings and other initiatives. Reexamine our mission statement in light of using it as a marketing tool.
9. Cultivate a culture of healthy communication and decision-making amongst staff with roles and responsibilities clearly defined by October 2012.

Now that the strategic plan is complete, the real work toward accomplishing our goals & objectives has begun! Staff members are each bottomlining several objectives, and will be regularly reporting back to the board on progress. They will also be working on a business plan to complement the strategic plan.

We’d especially like to thank Bruce, Scott and the rest of the Board for supporting this process. Common Ground Center staff also deserve kudos for many hours of thoughtful hard work. We are very lucky to have devoted staff members who really care about the future of Common Ground. Thanks to Neily, Connor, Kiesha, Elin, Carole, Peg and Jim.

**The Common Good Gift Shop**

If you’ve spent time with us during summer programs, you may have browsed the Common Good Gift Shop. We’re taking time this year to re-invent the Gift Shop as our faithful store organizers (to whom we are eternally grateful!), Veronica Gadbois and Lori Biamonte shift responsibilities.

While we do plan to scale back a bit, you’ll still be able to take home a t-shirt & satisfy your chocolate cravings! If you’d like to contribute input or energy to the Gift Shop, please contact Kiesha at kiesha@c9cvt.org.
**New Kids on the Block**

We’re always delighted to have brand new campers with us. Several members of the Common Ground community are expecting, and we can’t wait to meet their babies this summer!

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**Join the Common Ground Earth Day Challenge!**

When people spend time here at CGC, they get to put their environmentally friendly values into practice for a week or more. But it’s easy to forget those values when we return to the fast-paced “real world.”

That’s why we’re inviting you to

**join us this Earth Day - Sunday, April 22 - for an ELECTRICITY-FREE day!**

By our calculation, if 200 Common Ground households turn off their televisions, devices, lights, and appliances for one full day, we could collectively save 6400 kilowatt hours! That’s equivalent to roughly 8500 lbs of coal or, in the case of hydroelectric energy, 5120 gallons of water!

A hidden benefit of turning off your electricity is that you get to remember what it’s like to be at Camp, where unplugging and spending time with your family & friends is the norm! You don’t need electricity to get outside, play a board game, or have a picnic by candlelight! Plus, you’ll have an excuse to take a break from laundry, ironing, vacuuming, and other energy-consuming chores!

To join this challenge and connect with other participating families, search for Common Ground Center on facebook and join the event titled “Earth Day Challenge”. If you don’t have facebook, drop us a line and we’ll post on your behalf.

Since you won’t have electricity on Earth Day, we challenge you to write us a real-live letter telling us how you spent your day. **Letters will be entered in a drawing to win a free Common Ground Center canvas bag!**

Our address for letter-writers is:

Common Ground Center
473 Tatro Rd
Starksboro, VT 05487

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**Can You Spare a Penny?**

One of the best things about Common Ground Center is that we involve campers of all age ranges in everything we do. It’s come to our attention that until now, fundraising has been something only grown-ups can do. In order to fix this situation we have launched a “Pennies for CGC” campaign.

We all have pennies lying around our houses, apartments and most likely our offices that we’d love to get rid of! Between now and camp, we are challenging Common Ground kids to collect those pennies and bring them to camp with them. All you need to participate is an empty jar. Contact us and we’ll send you a label to stick on your jar. Our goal is to raise $1000 in pennies for our scholarship fund.

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The sap is running here in Vermont! Did you know that it takes about 40 gallons of sap to produce one gallon of syrup?! There are about 2000 maple producers in Vermont, including our very own Co-Founder, Peg Kamens!
2012 Calendar

- Men's Retreat: March 2 - 4
- Women's Weekend: May 18 - 20
- Aspiring Artists Retreat: May 25 - 29
- Camp Kaleidoscope: June 21 - 24
- Camp Common Ground, Week 1: July 21 - 27
- Camp Common Ground, Week 2: July 28 - August 3
- Camp Common Ground, Week 3: August 4 - 10
- Camp Common Ground, Week 4: August 11 - 17
- Chinese Culture Camp: August 20 - 23
- Lost Arts Week: September 10 - 14

Space is limited so don’t delay; register today!

Our Mission Statement:
Common Ground Center is a nonprofit, multi-age arts, education, and outdoor recreation center. We are dedicated to environmental sustainability and strengthening diverse families and communities through unique program offerings and facility rentals.

Open Pages is produced twice annually by the Common Ground Center staff. Contact the office at (802) 453-2592 or e-mail us at info@cgcvt.org. Our address is 473 Tatro Rd., Starksboro, VT 05487, and our website is www.cgcvt.org.

Common Ground Center Staff
- Peg Kamens, Co-Director
- Jim Mendell, Co-Director
- Carole Blane, Program Director
- Elin Melchior, Operations Coordinator
- Kiesha Richardson, Rental Coordinator
- Neily Jennings, Communications Coordinator
- Connor Timmons, Program Coordinator
- Wendy Shepard, Caretaker

CGC Board of Directors
- Jill Entis, Dew B Wilde, Lori Biamonte
- John Sheridan, Rhoen Pruesse-Adams
- Brooks Griffith, Scott Meyer, Bruce Rodgers, Jane McGurty, Justin Bouvier
- and Elizabeth Lorris Ritter

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Return Service Requested