

# Schools & Education

## Love for Puerto Rico

The South Burlington community is invited to join the South Burlington High School (SBHS) Key Club and SB Mentoring for a community service project entitled "Love for Puerto Rico" by donating school supplies to replenish those materials lost in the impact of Hurricane Irma and María. According to SBHS Healthy Schools Coordinator Susie Merrick, this community service project is part of the larger letter-writing campaign to students in Puerto Rico from this year's Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Community Event and SB Mentoring's National Mentoring Month service activity.

**Donations of school supplies can be dropped off at any of the city's schools.**

Donations of pencils, crayons, coloring pencils, erasers, and headband flashlights with batteries may be dropped off now through February 23 in collection boxes at all schools in the South Burlington School District. The supplies will be shipped to Carreras Middle School, Palmer, Rio Grande, Puerto Rico. Merrick says the donation will give the Puerto Rican students and staff the message, "We are thinking about you. We care about you."

Christopher Nytech of the Department of Environmental Sciences, University of Puerto Rico, Rio

Piedras, explained, "So much of the recovery from the hurricane requires monumental efforts over long time frames with extensive financial resources and planning. It can be daunting, and also overwhelming. But there is a crucially important need for localized efforts and the sharing of the simple, powerful gifts of kindness and love, which can foster resilience and hope in difficult times. Thank you for caring!"

SBHS Key Club is the high school's chapter of the international Kiwanis service organization with a mission of offering "opportunities to provide service, build character, and develop leadership." SB Mentoring is the South Burlington School District's school-based mentoring program which matches caring, respectful adults from the community one-on-one with wonderful young people in grades K-10 to help them find their "sparks," their passions and interests.

For more information on the SBHS Key Club, contact SBHS advisor Rich Wise at [rwise@sb-schools.net](mailto:rwise@sb-schools.net). For more information on SB Mentoring, contact Merrick at [smerrick@sbschools.net](mailto:smerrick@sbschools.net).



Taylor Tomasi and her mentor Dierdra Michelle work on flyers for the "Love for Puerto Rico" community service project.



Students from Big Picture South Burlington hosted an event for Vermont high school students to exhibit their unique and innovative projects.

## Big Picture Soars

### Learning Summit Showcases Project Based Learning

Big Picture South Burlington, a school-within-a-school at South Burlington High School, hosted a Learning Summit January 26 at St. John Vianney Parish. High school students from all over Vermont exhibited their project-based work, which showcased the results of a different type of learning. The day was structured so students had a chance to display their work gallery-style or in a 'stand and deliver' presentation. Big Picture South Burlington was joined by other innovative schools including Champlain Valley Union's Nexus, U-32's Pilot, Vergennes High School's Walden Project, Winooski High School's iLab, and students from Enosburg Falls High School and Twinfield Union School, who all participate in project and proficiency based high school alternatives. The collaborative event featured 75 presenters.

Project based learning is slowly becoming a more common educational method as learning through experience, while

focusing on student interests rather than the traditional graded approach, becomes more accepted for graduation standards and college admissions. At the summit, students presented a number of projects, which varied from self-playing instruments to performance art.

Many of the students showed great motivation to learn, not only about their topics, but about themselves. "I wanted to figure out more about who I am as a learner and what methods work best for me," said Maddie Parker, a student from CVU's Nexus program. "I chose to do that through Norse mythology and by analyzing myself critically."

Other students have strong feelings about how these programs can ultimately change the way students learn. "I really wanted to pursue this program and do these specific projects because I know it's what my life is calling me to do. Programs like this are a big wakeup call to education in the

country," voiced Grae Moriath, who attends the Pilot program at U-32.

Project based learning programs can provide a strong support system for students, while creating numerous opportunities. "This kind of program is helpful because it gives you time and resources to get stuff done. There are other people in my group who are doing this and they have to do it on the side, whereas I get credit," says Nexus student Lindsey Drew. January's Learning Summit demonstrated that real learning happens when students are engaged and fully present in the world around them. Given this learning opportunity, the work the students produced and presented was truly inspirational.

*By Addison White, student at Big Picture South Burlington, a project-based program at South Burlington High School that seeks to engage and motivate students through independent learning and student driven curriculum.*

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