



A Note From *Dr. Mac*

Happy New Year from Vertus! We hope you enjoyed the two-week holiday vacation and we are delighted to welcome our young men back to our building for a successful second quarter.

As we move forward, we once again invite all family members to attend the next meeting of our **Vertus Family Organization**. Our first meeting in January was very productive and we thank all the parents and guardians who attended. At this meeting, families expressed an interest in hearing more from Vertus staff about topics such as credit accumulation, how Edgenuity works, and career pathways, among others.

Our February meeting will focus on how students earn credits. I will share a presentation with everyone who attends and answer any questions that come up. We hope to see you there!

Next Vertus Family Organization Meeting

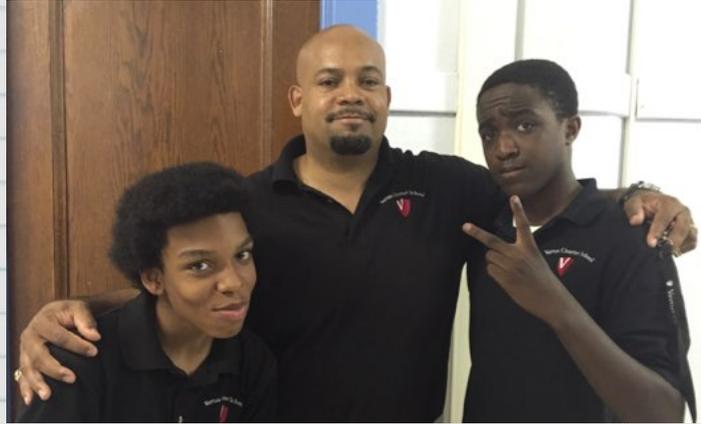
Tuesday, February 9, 5:30pm-7:00pm

Dinner and childcare provided

Topic of Presentation:

How Does Credit Earning Work at Vertus?

RSVP to pwhite@vertusschool.org or
(585) 747-8911



Vertus is Now Recruiting for 2016-17—Please Spread the Word!

Word of mouth from our families is the best advertising when it comes to recruiting new students—please help us spread the word around Rochester! If you know families who have young men entering 9th or 10th grade in 2016-17, there are lots of ways for them to get in touch with Vertus. Some suggestions you can share:

- “Like” our Facebook page
- Visit our website: <http://www.vertusschool.org>
- Call the school at (585) 747-8911 or email Perry White, our Director of External Affairs, at pwhite@vertusschool.org
- Attend one of our upcoming family information sessions:

Thursday, February 4

5:30 pm – 6:30 pm

Saturday, March 5

11:00 am – 12:00 pm

Both sessions are at Vertus (2 Austin St., Rochester, NY 14606).



COMMUNITY SERVICE: See p. 5 for details on Vertus students giving back to the community at the holidays.



HANDS-ON LEARNING: Pictures and quotations from our Technical Performance Systems students appear on p. 6.



SUGGESTIONS FOR NEWSLETTER STORIES? Contact Naomi Geier at 646.483.9548 or ngeier@vertusschool.org.

Vertus Students Join Local FIRST Robotics Competition Team

Robotics has been one of Vertus' hands-on learning activities since the school opened, but this year, a group of committed Robotics students is taking their experience to the next level. Five Vertus students will compete in FIRST Robotics' annual competition, which draws thousands of high school students from all over the world.

As FIRST Robotics explains the competition on its website, "Under strict rules, limited resources, and an intense six-week time limit, teams of 20 or more students are challenged to raise funds, design a team 'brand,' hone teamwork skills, and build and program industrial-size robots to play a difficult field game against like-minded competitors. It's as close to real-world engineering as a student can get."

Vertus is participating in FIRST Robotics through Team 3838, a local team that incorporates students from several Rochester city schools. This requires a full-day Saturday commitment for six weeks—not for the faint of heart! Linda Maulding, a veteran engineer who leads Vertus' Robotics class, and Matt Rollins, a Vertus math teacher

ROBOTICS IN ACTION



Vertus students Kishad Griner and Ahmed Almugnnaahi experiment with one of last year's robots (left) and attend a brainstorming session led by mentor engineers (right).

who co-leads Robotics, are chaperoning students Ahmed Almugnnaahi, Alejandro Dejesus, Luis Diaz, Kishad Griner, and Mishawn Holloway. Team 3838's robot will compete at Penfield High School in mid-February, with the opportunity to compete regionally and even nationally if they place well.

Best of luck to our very dedicated Robotics students!

CAREER CORNER

Job Readiness Spotlight: Punctuality and Attendance

"Success starts with showing up." Almost everyone has heard this expression by the time they get to high school, but not everyone internalizes how important it is. As Vertus students start to prepare for success in the workplace as well as at school, one of the most important things for them to keep in mind is that **punctuality and attendance are extremely important to employers.**

Andrea Bertucci, Vertus' Career Program Manager, has over 10 years of experience working with teens and their employers. Over and over, businesses have told her that "if they couldn't count on someone to be there when they needed to be there, if students weren't on time and they

weren't at work, nothing else really mattered. If they couldn't be counted on, it didn't matter how great they were at everything else.

"There's a shift in responsibility that some students struggle with," Ms.

Bertucci added. "When you come late to school, there's not always a consequence, or there's not the expectation that *you*, the student, will call to let someone know you're going to be late or absent. Usually it's on the parent or guardian. But what I had employers say to me was, 'I don't want someone's mom calling me. I need my employee to communicate with me directly.'"

So how can Vertus students be job-ready when it comes to punctuality and attendance? "Come to school every day on time! That's the best way to do it—start building those habits with school so that you already have them when you get to work." It's true wherever you go: you can't be successful if you aren't there.



VERTUS SCHOLARS AND MAN OF THE MONTH

The Man of the Month award honors a Vertus student who lives out the virtues of Courage, Leadership, and Responsibility on a daily basis. It is the highest individual award that any student can receive at Vertus. Students nominate their peers and the staff works together to choose one monthly winner.

Vertus Scholar awards are granted monthly by our teachers in recognition of academic excellence in a particular subject. Congratulations to all these young men for their outstanding achievements!



Lee Cooper

November/December 2015
Man of the Month

This gentleman continues to be a star on Team Peavy. He is always willing to lead, has no problem following, and is extremely humble. He is destined for a bright future!



Angel Ayuso

ELA Scholar of the Month

This gentleman has passed all but one of his ELA quizzes with a score of 80 or above *on the first attempt!* He is an active participant in reading workshop and acts as a leader by encouraging positive behavior and focus in his fellow brothers.



Anthony Perez

Math Scholar of the Month

This young man works hard and engages challenging math problems in workshop and on Edgenuity. He has achieved an impressive understanding of difficult concepts by working diligently, taking notes, and asking staff for help.



Immanuel Mackie

Science Scholar of the Month

This young man has shown great self-control by getting to school on time and coming to workshop prepared to learn. During class discussions, he shows a zest for learning about science topics and is always ready to participate.



Myles Rose

Social Studies Scholar of the Month

You can find this gentleman writing all throughout the day: notes in the lab, responses in his Global course, and entries during Freedom Writers. Although it takes time and effort, he consistently works on honing his craft.

CHARACTER AWARDS

DECEMBER 2015

Ahkil Hargrove Grit	Dennis Beard Brother's Keeper, Zest	Kaspar Bennett Brother's Keeper	Morris Robinson Grit, Gratitude	Selavantez Bennett-Yawn Brother's Keeper
Ahmed Almugnnahi Brother's Keeper, Grit, Self-Control	Diondre Williams Gratitude	Keith Bryant Brother's Keeper, Optimism	Nasir Hicks Curiosity	Semaj Wilson Grit
Alejandro Dejesus Grit	Donta Badura Optimism	Lee Cooper Brother's Keeper	Nayshawn Smith Grit	Sha'mere Watkins Zest
Alexander Samuel Grit	Drahai Newport-Beasley Brother's Keeper	Jon'Dale Patterson Social Intelligence	Nelvin Martinez Grit	Sharodd Walker Grit
Anthony Perez Gratitude	Eh'vion Douglass Grit x 2	Luis Diaz Self-Control	Nicholas Shabazz Brother's Keeper	Stephon Augustin Grit
Carlos Gonzalez Brother's Keeper	Giovonni Cintron Social Intelligence	Marcher Spencer Gratitude	Paijon Sheppard Social Intelligence	Team Ferguson Brother's Keeper
Cedric Mitchell Brother's Keeper	Isaiah Ficklin Grit	Marquis Floyd-Stanley Curiosity, Social Intelligence	Pedro Berrios Gratitude	Team Kadar Gratitude
Christopher Hunter Social Intelligence	Isiah Gill Grit	Michael Williams Social Intelligence	Rayshawn Brumfield Grit x 2	Team Peavy Brother's Keeper
D'Kari Gayle Brother's Keeper x 2	Isiah Hester Brother's Keeper x 2	Mishawn Holloway Optimism	Ricky Bogan Optimism	Team Woods Brother's Keeper
Dajuan Bennett Self-Control	Jaekwon Chisolm Brother's Keeper		Rushaine Blake Brother's Keeper, Self-Control	Torrence Nelson Grit
Darin Waters Grit	Jaihlen Brown Curiosity x 2, Grit		Savon Scott Zest	Troy Cooper Zest
Darius Golden Gratitude, Social Intelligence	Jamell Fedrick Grit			Victor Crespo Gratitude
David Francis Brother's Keeper	Jaques Hamilton Brother's Keeper			
David Gayle Optimism	Jason Haywood Grit			
David McCartney Brother's Keeper, Grit	Jermaine Williams Brother's Keeper			
Davion Terry Social Intelligence	Jevon Henry Brother's Keeper, Gratitude			
De'Andre Hunter Grit	Jon'Dale Patterson Social Intelligence			

TEAM BRAY

DECEMBER TEAM OF THE MONTH



Antonio Santana, Sincere Lane, Miguel Miranda, Alexis Perez, Cashious Thompson, Jeremiah Gonzalez, Benny Rodriguez, Jaquez Lacey, Alexander Samuel, Sincere Lane, Sharodd Walker, Asa Vines, Angel Ayuso, Tajmere Grice, Jason Haywood, Eric Porter, Mr. Bray, and Donovan Jackson. Not pictured: Adonis Garcia and Yahzeed Howard.

Spreading Holiday Cheer: Community Service Projects on Two Learning Teams



Jacolby Sermons and Jeremiah Fleming tag and inventory gifts at Toys for Tots.

The week before Vertus' holiday vacation, two learning teams took time out to remember that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Preceptor Ben Kadar took his students to the Toys for Tots warehouse on Buffalo Rd. and Preceptor Jamaal Peavy took a group of students across the street to Holy Apostles Catholic Church to help with their Christmas Blessing Project. Both groups spent quality time in community service and learned about how these two organizations serve the Rochester community at the holidays and throughout the year.

"Toys for Tots was started in 1948 by the Marine Corps Reserve to help families in need, not only families of military who were returning from the war but also families from the community," said Sharon Beeke, who is Toys for Tots' Rochester Warehouse Coordinator and who supervised our students during the project. "There was a huge need back then and there's still a huge need now. Everyone here is a volunteer; we do not take any money for anything. We are just here to help out our communities."

Students from Team Kadar spent their time sorting through Toys for Tots' enormous collection of donated gifts. Each gift must be tagged, inventoried, and sorted by age and gender before it can be given to a child. This was complicated work, but our young men pitched in with great enthusiasm and determination, sorting several hundred gifts in a matter of hours.

"We've been studying gratitude in seminar as one of our character strengths and we've learned that gratitude isn't just being thankful, but it's also giving back to show your appreciation," said Mr. Kadar. "So around this part of the year, the holidays, we wanted to do something special for our community. And it was a great experience—the guys did great and were really happy to be doing it."

Meanwhile, back at Holy Apostles, Team Peavy students were hard at work on the Christmas Blessing Project. "The church invites people who have registered to come and choose their own gifts for their children," said Betsy MacKinnon, LCSW, who is a part-time counselor at

Vertus and a longtime parishioner at Holy Apostles. "Then they take those gifts to a wrapping station, where all the gifts are wrapped for them, and they also receive a huge food basket for the Christmas season."



Corey Brown and Mekhi Jackson take a break from sorting gifts at Toys for Tots.

Team Peavy visited the Christmas Blessing Project twice: once to help set things up before families arrived and once to assist while families were visiting to pick out their gifts. Students did everything from greeting families to organizing tables and even wrapping presents.

"The kids were very gracious and I think they got to see that all of us have the responsibility to help others," said Ms. MacKinnon. "We talked about how important it is to give back to our community in some way. And this is just a very small little project that we do, yet 93 families were helped."

"It was a good experience to know how we gave back to the community, how we could help kids that need help and that can't afford toys," added Team Kadar student Anthony Perez "And it was also fun because we worked as a team."



Eric Porter helps at Holy Apostles.

ENRICHMENT PHOTO GALLERY: TECHNICAL PERFORMANCE SYSTEMS



What's in a name? Technical Performance Systems might be called Auto Shop at another school, but Preceptors Keniel Ferguson and Gary Mandell have taken the class far beyond basic auto mechanics and repair. Under their instruction, students have built radios, constructed model turbine engines, performed oil and tire changes, and even made pocket cell phone chargers out of Altoids tins! Next quarter, their plans include building speakers from tin cans and custom-designing their own car rims. "I love this class because I get to teach our young men and see the joy on their faces when they learn something new," says Mr. Mandell. Adds Mr. Ferguson, "I was born to make stuff and I love to teach."

Clockwise from left: Seth Ramos and Miguel Miranda check a dipstick; Adonis Garcia sands and repaints a bumper; Seth Ramos, Eric Cornwall, and Corey Brown work with Mr. Mandell to assemble a closed circuit; and Seth Ramos, Corey Brown, Mr. Mandell, Quincy Clayton, Rayshawn Brumfield, and Eric Cornwall learn basic soldering skills. Photos taken by Mr. Ferguson.

About Vertus

Vertus Charter School prepares leaders of character for the community and the workplace through strong relationships, personalized curriculum, character education, and career preparation. Vertus is a tuition-free, public charter high school for young men.

About Our Newsletter

This newsletter is brought to you by Naomi Geier, Communications and Enrichment Coordinator. Please contact Ms. Geier at 646.483.9548 or ngeier@vertusschool.org with any questions or feedback.



OUR CO-FOUNDERS: Mr. Perry White, Director of External Affairs, and Dr. Leigh McGuigan, CEO.