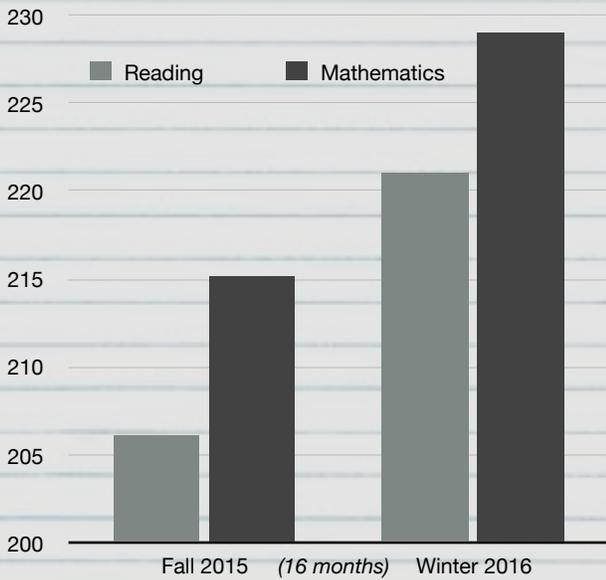


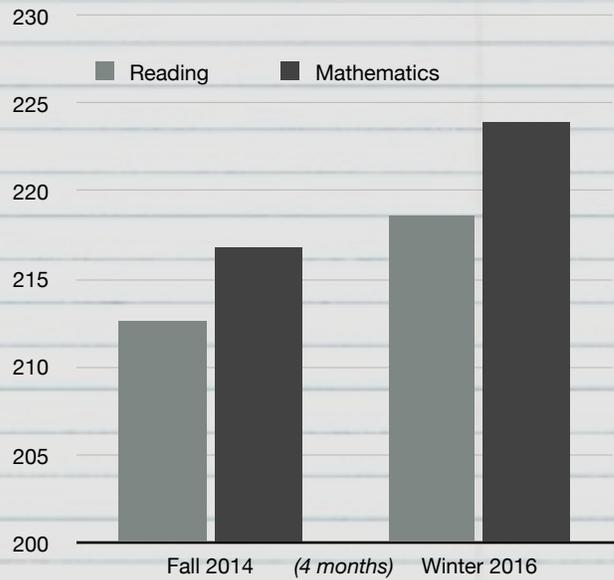


## More Stellar NWEA Test Results for New and Returning Vertus Students



**Second-Year Students**

~ 4.5 years' growth in Reading in 16 months  
~ 3 years' growth in Math in 16 months



**First-Year Students**

~ 2 years' growth in Reading in 4 months  
~ 1 years' growth in Math in 4 months

**Together, our students made 319.9% of expected progress in Reading and 291.3% of expected progress in Math.**

These results speak for themselves: our young men are redefining what is usually considered possible. With personalized curriculum, extended learning time, goal-setting and rewards, joyful celebrations of achievement milestones, and being known and loved as individuals by Preceptors and other staff members, Vertus students are thriving both socially and academically—and it is **their** intelligence and hard work on display in these results. We couldn't be prouder of them!



**TEAM OF THE MONTH TIMES TWO:** Read about Team 100, who have won Team of the Month twice in a row, on p. 8.



**RED TIE CEREMONY:** See p. 6 for pictures from our first Red Tie Ceremony and an explanation of its meaning.



**SUGGESTIONS FOR NEWSLETTER STORIES?** Contact Naomi Geier at 646.483.9548 or [ngeier@vertusschool.org](mailto:ngeier@vertusschool.org).

# Vertus Family Organization: Keeping Families Informed and Supporting Our Students

Family members of Vertus Charter School students: are you interested in getting more involved at Vertus? Joining the Vertus Family Organization, or VFO for short, is an excellent way to stay informed about what happens behind the scenes and share your perspectives with our school leadership. Led by Perry White, our Director of External Affairs, and Dean of Students Joe Carter, the VFO meets on the second Tuesday of every month (unless otherwise specified),

At our next meeting, we will have a special guest: Duncan Kirkwood, who represents Western New York for the Northeast Charter School Network. He will inform us about current advocacy efforts to provide charters with more equitable funding and how parents can get involved with these efforts. It is important to note that charters in Rochester only receive about 65% in per pupil funding compared to what the district receives. We also receive no help at all with facility costs.

**REMINDER: VERTUS IS MOVING!**

**JULY 11, 2016**



**21 Humboldt St  
Rochester, NY 14609**

## Upcoming Vertus Family Organization Meetings

Tuesday, March 8	5:30pm - 6:45pm
Tuesday, April 12	5:30pm - 6:45pm
Tuesday, May 10	5:30pm - 6:45pm
Thursday, June 16	5:30pm - 6:45pm

## CAREER CORNER

### Summer Employment for Vertus Students

by **Andrea Bertucci**  
**Career Program Manager**



Although it is only February, summer will be here before we know it. Vertus understands and supports the value of summer work opportunities for our students. Last year, we were able to offer 12 students the opportunity to work here at Vertus through the Summer of Opportunity e-NABLE program in partnership with RIT, RochesterWorks!, and the City of Rochester. We are hopeful that we will again be able to offer summer job opportunities here at Vertus to students in summer 2016.

Vertus' first responsibility is to ensure that all students are

academically on track to graduate from high school and succeed in their educational and career pursuits beyond high school.

With this priority in mind,

**students must meet certain**

**minimum credit requirements to work during Vertus' summer hours,**

which are 9:00 am to 3:00 pm Monday through Thursday and 9:00 am to 12:30 pm on Friday. Students with sufficient credits and permission from the school may be eligible to leave school at 12:00 each day to go to work in the afternoons.

Vertus is in the process of determining this minimum credit requirement for both first- and second-year students. We will notify families and students as soon as we have made the decision. For more information about summer jobs and job readiness, please contact me (Andrea Bertucci, Career Program Manager) at (585) 481-4500 or [abertucci@vertusschool.org](mailto:abertucci@vertusschool.org).



# STUDENT INTERVIEW: Board Chairman Ty Kelly

**Interviewed by Braijon Scott**

...

**You've just become the Chairman of the Board at Vertus.**

**What does a Board Chair do?**

The Board Chair oversees the leaders of the school and makes sure that what they put in their charter and the goals that they have set for you match up with what's happening. So I'm kind of like a watchman—I'm looking over their shoulders to make sure that they're doing the best they can for our students.

**What is it about Vertus that made you want to be a part of the Board?**

First of all, it's a school for young men, and I feel personally that there hasn't been enough attention paid to our young men. You guys have a lot of abilities and skills that people just don't appreciate, but I do—I was born and raised here and I had a lot of the same challenges that you are probably going through now. And my second reason was the whole model itself—the Preceptors, where you have one person responsible for 16 students and they're right here, located at the school, I think that is so important. You have somebody that you can go to here at the school, regardless of wherever you're having issues, at home or school or work—when you're here, there's someone looking out for you.

**You currently work for Wegmans. How long have you worked there and what is your current job?**

I've worked at Wegmans for 23 years, and I'm now the Director of Youth Development. I oversee educational programs for youth. Primarily we have the Hillside Work-Scholarship connection, and in our company, we have about 2,000 young men and women who came through the program who are working for us. And one of my accomplishments that I feel really good about is that young people who grew up here are now working at Wegmans everywhere—New York, New Jersey, Buffalo, Maryland, Syracuse—and they're doing really well in their careers.

**How many teenagers have you hired over the years?**

Thousands! If you're familiar with Wegmans, you know that we hire a lot of youth, starting at 15, usually to work on the front end as cashiers. So when I say thousands, I really mean thousands.

**Are you living your childhood or teenage dreams?**

Yes. I always wanted to get married, which I have, and I wanted to make enough money that my wife could stay home and raise our children—we were able to do that—and I wanted my children to have the kind of childhood where they could actually be a child. A lot of our young people have to forfeit their childhoods because they have to grow up so fast. They *have* to be a man or a woman because of the circumstances that they were born in, and in that case, that was true of me too. I had to grow up fast because I didn't live in a very nurturing environment at home and a lot of my childhood was a blur. But I have three children and four grandchildren, and all of them are doing well. So yes—I'm living my childhood dream.

**What do you want for Vertus in the future?**

I want you guys to be able to realize *your* childhood dreams. That's it. I want you to be able to do whatever you want to do.



Ty Kelly and Braijon Scott.

# 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 our young men for their outstanding achievements!



## **Immanuel Mackie**

January 2016  
Man of the Month

Mr. Mackie has been a model student for his entire team this past month. He shows on a daily basis that courage, leadership, and responsibility are three keys to success at

Vertus. He attends school on a daily basis and is able to focus on his academics. He consistently works hard and shows many positive character strengths such as grit, self control, and optimism. Mr. Mackie also continues to show growth and leadership by teaching seminar to his entire team and actively managing student behavior in the lab. He goes from day to day with the best of intentions and takes responsibility for his actions, and he has shown that our learning environment works by obtaining the highest score on the Living Environment Regents exam this month.



Mr. Mackie takes his work seriously, puts his full effort into learning, never tries to take short cuts, and can always be relied upon to contribute his unique and interesting perspectives when it comes to class discussions.

## **Immanuel Mackie**

ELA Scholar of the Month



Mr. Baez began his Algebra 1 course in September and has shown impressive grit, nearly completing it in less than 5 months. He has learned to read questions carefully and show his work when working through difficult problems.

## **Jorge Baez**

Math Scholar of the Month



Mr. Brown, after starting Living Environment in October, was able to complete the first three quarters before the exam last week. This is truly the Vertus way: working at your own pace and completing courses in less time than at a traditional school.

## **Corey Brown**

Science Scholar of the Month



Mr. Williams has done a remarkable job this month staying focused and asking thought-provoking questions as Mr. Broz's class followed the upcoming electoral race. He showed great maturity in encouraging his brothers when they needed to refocus.

## **Jermaine Williams**

Social Studies Scholar of the Month



# INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER AWARDS JANUARY 2016

## Brother's Keeper

Adonis Garcia  
Ahmed Almugnnahi x 2  
Angel Ayuso  
Anthony Perez x 2  
D'Kari Gayle  
Immanuel Mackie x 2  
Jah'Mierre Carter  
Jayden Berry  
Selavantez Bennett-Yawn  
Seth Ramos  
Sincere Lane  
Troy Cooper

## Curiosity

Ahmed Almugnnahi  
Jacolby Sermons

## Gratitude

Davion Terry  
Quincy Clayton

## Grit

Adonis Garcia x 2  
Alejandro Dejesus  
Alexander Samuel x 2  
Alexis Perez x 2  
Angel Ayuso x 2  
Anthony Perez  
Cashious Thompson x 2  
Corey Brown  
David Gayle  
David MaCartney  
Davion Terry  
Dennis Beard  
Eh'vion Douglass

Eric Porter x 2  
Jakeith Mosley x 2  
Jason Haywood  
Johnel Ravenell

Jorge Baez  
Laray Miller  
Marquis Floyd-Stanley  
Michael Williams

## Grit (cont'd.)

Miguel Miranda  
Nelvin Martinez  
Ricky Bogan  
Semaj Wilson  
Sharodd Walker  
Yoshoua Bartlett

## Optimism

Ahmed Almugnnahi  
Blerim Ilazi  
Christian McClain  
Justin McGill x 2  
Lee Cooper  
Marcus Bolling  
Nelson Joaquin

## Social Intelligence

Antonio Rucinski

## Self-Control

Diondre Williams  
Corey Brown  
Jahvier Lewis  
Keith Bryant  
Marcus Bolling  
Michael Williams  
Shandan Jones  
Tyheim Gillispie

## Zest

Asa Vines  
David MaCartney  
Jahvier Lewis  
Jorge Baez  
Marquis Floyd-Stanley  
Miguel Colon  
Mishawn Holloway  
Morris Robinson

## TEAM 100 JANUARY TEAM OF THE MONTH



Members of Team 100 pose with Social Studies teacher Mark Broz, who does academic goal-setting with the team every week. Left to right: Jaquez Lacy, Mark Broz, Asa Vines, Sharodd Walker, Sincere Lane, Alexis Perez, Jeremiah Gonzalez, Antonio Santana, Angel Ayuso, Alexander Samuel, Preceptor Justin Bray, and Donovan Jackson.

This month, Team Bray, otherwise known as Team 100, achieved a historic first at Vertus—they won Team of the Month two months in a row! Lately, this team is also known as “the Golden State Warriors of Vertus” for having racked up more weekly awards this year than any other team: a stunning 28 awards combined for Team Grit (the team that made the greatest academic progress in one week), Team GPA (the team with the highest GPA), and Team on Time (the team with the highest on-time attendance percentage). Team 100 is also the only team in Vertus history to have won the trifecta—all three awards in the same week! These young men are gearing up for another trifecta in the month of March... stay tuned.

Turn to p. 8 to read what the team has to say about the secrets of their success!

# VERTUS PHOTO GALLERY

## Red Tie Status Earned by Six Students

If you're walking the halls at Vertus these days, you may see a young man wearing a red tie instead of the usual black tie that goes with our uniform. This tie marks those of our students who have earned at least 5 credits and completed both 9th grade ELA and 9th grade Math. These students earn privileges that include special field trips, job readiness coaching, and leadership roles throughout the building. We are tremendously proud of their accomplishments, determination, and hard work!



*Cory Johnson narrates as Preceptor Shane Duesler awards David McCartney his red tie while Jakeith Mosley and Myles Rose await their turns.*



*Cory Johnson looks on as Preceptor Keniel Ferguson awards Kishad Griner his red tie.*



*Our first six red tie recipients! Left to right: Kishad Griner, Shandan Jones, David McCartney, Jakeith Mosley, Myles Rose, and Charles Ruffin.*



*The ties in gift bags, ready for presentation.*

# Two New Faces at Vertus: Chief Operating Officer and Human Resources

Vertus Charter School is pleased to welcome two new staff members: Jason Mellen, Chief Operating Officer, and Amy Jensen in Human Resources. Both come to Vertus from backgrounds in business and both can be found in the main office, though Ms. Jensen is only in on Tuesdays and Thursday. (Oddly enough, as you can see at right, they also share similar taste in eyeglass frames!)

Ms. Jensen was born and raised in South Dakota, grew up in Minnesota, and spent the last 17 years living in Denver before relocating to Rochester. She appreciates the quality of life here and looks forward to buying a house and settling into a new city. "I love the farmer's market—it's the most amazing farmer's market I've ever seen!" she says of her move to Rochester. She has spent most of her professional life in the hospitality industry, most recently directing Human Resources at two Hilton Hotels for six years. These days, Ms. Jensen's role at Vertus is mostly recruiting new staff members, but she also looks forward to doing staff training and support, among other things, in future months.

Mr. Mellen has spent most of his years here in New York: originally from Victor, he attended SUNY Fredonia before moving to New York City, where he got a degree in International Education from Columbia University Teachers College. Before coming to Vertus, he spent several years managing a car dealership!—this was, as he describes it, "very much a left turn from education, but it helped me gain a lot of business skills." When he's not working, Mr. Mellen likes to go camping and spend as much time outdoors as possible.

If you see Mr. Mellen or Ms. Jensen in the building, please stop to say hello! They have a tremendous job ahead of them as Vertus prepares to double in size next year and relocate to a new building custom-designed for our needs. This means finding many new staff members and orchestrating a complicated moving process. We appreciate these two for rising to the occasion!



**Jason Mellen**  
Chief Operating Officer



**Amy Jensen**  
Human Resources



## Babies of Vertus: It's a Girl!

Preceptor Keniel Ferguson and his wife Aline welcomed **Amaya Jade Ferguson** on January 25! At 6 lbs. 11 oz. and 17 inches, she is beautiful and healthy. Here she is (pictured at left) with her big brother Keegan, age 2. Mom, Dad, Keegan, and Amaya are all doing well.

"She's a very quiet girl," says Mr. Ferguson. "She's starting to show emotions right now, like smiling and frowning and knitting her eyebrows. On the whole, she's the complete opposite of her big brother, who was a real loudmouth at that age." Mr. Ferguson added gratefully, "We can sleep now." Vertus wishes the very best to the Ferguson family as they watch their newest member continue to grow!

# MEET TEAM 100: THE SECRETS OF THEIR SUCCESS



*Left to right and back to front: Sincere Lane, Antonio Santana, Alexander Samuel, Asa Vines, Eric Porter, Sharodd Walker, Adonis Garcia, Alexis Perez, Donovan Jackson, Jeremiah Gonzalez, Benny Rodriguez, Preceptor Justin Bray, Angel Ayuso, and Jason Haywood. Not pictured: Jaquez Lacey and Yahzeed Howard.*

“We all have a goal for every week and we all chase the same thing. We’re trying to change together.”  
—Alexis Perez

“What makes us a good team? The way we work in the lab and how hard we work, and how we come together as a family.”  
—Angel Ayuso

“We always work hard, persistently. We try to help our brothers out and we just don’t give up. You just have to have the spirit of not giving up, because if you feel like giving up, you’re not gonna better yourself, so you have to push yourself every day, and that’s just what we do every day, and that’s how we get all these wins.”  
—Donovan Jackson

“They put us on this team for a reason: to see if we could overcome our challenges by working with each other. We really became a brotherhood.”  
—Adonis Garcia

“We work hard, we work together, we don’t ever put each other down, and when it comes to it, we all be on the same page.”  
—Tajhmere Grice

## About Vertus

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

## About Our Newsletter

This newsletter is brought to you by Naomi Geier, Program Manager and English Instructor, and by Student Intern Braijon Scott. Please contact Ms. Geier at 646.483.9548 or [ngeier@vertusschool.org](mailto:ngeier@vertusschool.org) with any questions or feedback.



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