



Vertus Charter School

COURAGE, LEADERSHIP, RESPONSIBILITY

2 AUSTIN ST.
ROCHESTER, NY 14606

APRIL 2015
VOLUME 3

Special Feature: Summer Quarter at Vertus

Monday-Thursday 9:00am to 3:00pm • Friday 9:00am to 12:30pm

Why a Summer Session?

Vertus's innovative year-round model allows students more than 125% of the learning time available in a traditional school each year. Our students need this gift of additional time to help ensure that they pass all 5 required Regents exams and graduate on time, fully prepared for both college and careers.

Toward this end, we have pledged to help our students achieve at least 1 1/2 years of academic growth every school year. Our summer session is crucial to helping students attain this goal.

Physical Education Credit

This summer, Vertus students will spend two hours a day at Total Sports Experience earning 0.5 Physical Education credit, which will put them on track to earn the required 2 PE credits by graduation. Our summer PE program will be supervised by a certified teacher and will include a variety of indoor and outdoor sports and conditioning activities. We are excited to be able to provide this high level of physical activity!

Summer Uniform: Black Vertus Polo, Khaki Shorts, and Sneakers

Polo shirts may be ordered at Vertus between May 11 and May 19. Sneakers must be clean and in good condition.

Students may wear their own plain khaki shorts (no designs). See below for examples of acceptable shorts.



Summer Job Opportunities

At Vertus, we anticipate creating 12 part-time positions assembling 3D-printed prosthetic hands in collaboration with RIT's e-NABLE project. Details on how to apply will be shared with our students.

If a student has earned 5 credits by the beginning of the summer and has a verified summer job, he may be eligible to leave school at 12pm. Please contact Dr. Mac at (585) 747-8911 to discuss.

Special Academic Projects

Vertus is partnering with SUNY Brockport's Department of Education and Human Development to offer a five-week summer course taught by Brockport graduate students who are completing their adolescent summer literacy internship. This is a wonderful opportunity for our young men to receive one-on-one literacy tutoring with highly skilled instructors-in-training! English instructor José Barocio will also be teaching an intensive Regents writing preparatory workshop to help many of our students prepare for the upcoming exams.

Music Enrichment Class Travels to Buffalo to See *The Phantom of the Opera*

Andrew Lloyd Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera* is arguably the most popular stage production in world history. Having been seen by over 140 million people in 30 countries and translated into 13 languages, it is truly a cultural phenomenon. It is also a powerful, funny, dramatic, scary, and poignant show with great music, a captivating story, and occasional onstage explosions.

Vertus teacher Naomi Geier, who leads the Music enrichment class, had already seen *Phantom* four times when she saw a poster for the touring production while on a trip to Buffalo. She realized that her Music students would love the show and submitted a field trip request to Dr. Mac, who graciously agreed that Vertus would pay for tickets, transportation costs, and dinner.

This left Ms. Geier with three weeks to prepare her students for the trip. She began by teaching them about the Paris Opera House, the setting of the musical, which they were able to explore digitally via Google Culture. The students also listened to songs from the show, responded to stories from the plot, created a character map, and began to form their

A NIGHT AT THE OPERA



Left to right: Jaquan Hamilton, Naomi Geier, Antonio Rucinski, and Charles Ruffin in the lobby of Shea's Buffalo Theater.

own ideas about what might happen onstage.

And finally, on Thursday, March 26, three students and one teacher set out for Buffalo to see *Phantom!* Mr. Jaquan Hamilton, Mr. Antonio Rucinski, and Mr. Charles Ruffin behaved like perfect gentlemen and enjoyed themselves tremendously. It was a wonderful experience and we look forward to more musical field trips in the months ahead.

VERTUS SCHOLARS AND MEN 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. Students nominate their peers for consideration and the entire staff works together to choose one monthly winner from the nominees. 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!



Diondre Williams
February



Carlos Quiñones
March



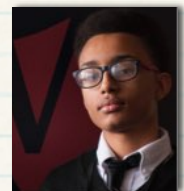
Je'Taime Bardques
Math



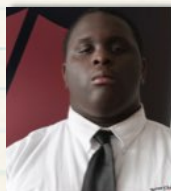
Bradley Austin
Social Studies



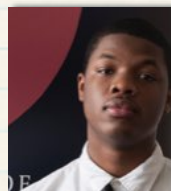
Kishad Griner
Math



Ricky Bogan
Social Studies



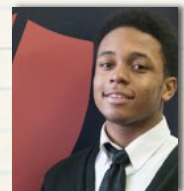
Christian McClain
Science



Stephon Augustin
ELA



Seth Ramos
Science



Omar McBride
ELA

Men of the Month

February 2015 Scholars

March 2015 Scholars



FROM OUR STUDENTS

Introducing Our Student Interns!

Please welcome three delightful new additions to our Vertus Newsletter! The young men pictured at right—Brajion Scott, Eric Porter, and Jakeith Mosley—are our new Student Interns, charged with assisting Program Manager Naomi Geier in all aspects of putting together Vertus’ school newsletter every month.

Producing the newsletter’s content begins with pitching article ideas, after which the pieces must be drafted, edited, and finalized. In addition, the graphic design and layout for each issue must be modified every month to accommodate that month’s unique articles and images. Starting with the May issue, our Student Interns will bear sole responsibility for all content and images on the “From Our Students” page and will also continue to assist Ms. Geier with the rest of the newsletter.

For this issue, Mr. Mosley wrote a piece on Vertus’ involvement with WellVentions (below) and Mr. Scott



Left to right: Brajion Scott, Eric Porter, and Jakeith Mosley.

conducted an interview with Preceptor Cory Johnson (opposite page). Mr. Porter, who was a late but welcome addition to our group, assisted Ms. Geier with layout and has a photo credit on the opposite page. We look forward to many more contributions from these young men in the months to come!

WellVentions: Helping Vertus Students Get. That. Dough.

by Jakeith Mosley



Spencer Burns and Jakeith Mosley learning the basics of videography at a WellVentions session.

It is never too early to learn what it takes to be successful in the business world. Ten Vertus students are getting the opportunity to participate in a program called WellVentions.

WellVentions is a local nonprofit organization that gives students entrepreneurial training in selling and marketing healthy foods. Students will be producing and starring in a video that promotes healthy living and marketing a pasta and pasta sauce that was developed by other WellVention participants. This is a very exciting



STUDENT INTERVIEW: Preceptor Cory Johnson

Interviewed by Braijon Scott

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What were your educational experiences growing up?

Well, I'm born and raised in Rochester. For high school, I went to East High School; I went to a couple of different schools—I was at Franklin. I wasn't the greatest student, but I tried hard. After high school, I went to MCC and then I went to Empire College, and then Brockport.

What is it about Vertus that made you want to work here?

I've always worked with young men in the community. I actually worked for RCSD, where I ran a school, New Beginnings, and I've just always had a passion for working with young men and helping them excel, grow, and really find out who they are, and helping them develop their own character.

What are some of the struggles and successes you have seen this year?

I've seen the struggle of putting together a school. I've seen the struggles of some of the stuff that goes on in the city of Rochester and the community—our young men killing each other, our young men being arrested, even some of our young women—so I've seen a lot of those struggles. As far as successes, we see successes in this building every day. I see young men who only showed up to school maybe two, three times last year, showing up to school just about every day. I see young men who got straight Fs on report cards becoming A and B students. I look at a young man like you doing this interview right now—have you ever done anything like this before?

No.

That's a success. Coming out of your own comfort zone. So for me, the successes I see, especially in this building, are the young men who come out of their comfort zone to do better and to try different things.

Are you living your childhood or teenage dreams?

No, because growing up in the way I grew up, and with all the challenges that I faced in my own household, this was probably the last thing I ever wanted to do. But then when I got older and started working in the community, doing this, this is the passion that I found.

What specific actions have led you down the road to success and what do you think have been the secrets to your success?

Here, I'll tell you this—and I've never told anybody this; I'll share this secret with you. The secret to success is: there is no secret. There is no secret whatsoever to success. The secret is, I work hard every day. I work hard on every level. I work hard on rebuilding myself, every day, to become a better person. Whatever I do, I'm committed to it and I push myself. I'm obsessed with getting knowledge. I'm obsessed with seeing young men do better, which means I have to push myself to make sure I'm leading them in the right direction. So that's my secret: that there is no secret. You work hard. You work hard for any and everything that you want. And you don't accept "no." I've never accepted "no." I push myself. I don't stop. I don't stop.



Cory Johnson and Braijon Scott. Photo by Eric Porter.

Artists' Corner: Preceptor James Daniels Discusses Art Enrichment at Vertus

Everybody has a creative side, and I think what's happened in a lot of situations with our guys is their creative side, for whatever reason, isn't flourishing. But when they get in here, they're looking at things they normally wouldn't look at and getting ideas, they're able to pull things from different sources and come up with their own ideas—they realize they *are* creative.



Yahzeed Howard

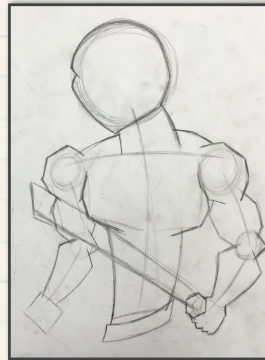


Unknown Artist

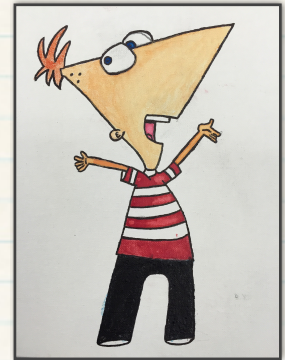
I have some guys who are very experienced artists; I have some guys who'd never picked up a paintbrush before. So just the fact that they're embracing the difficulty of painting, that they're having enough courage to sit down and try it, is huge.



Da'Mar Scott



Daniel Schranck

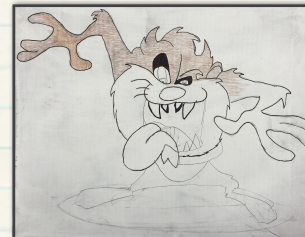


Shedrick Smith

And they don't ridicule each other. You have one student helping another student to draw a surfboard or, you know, "Your eye doesn't look right, so let me help you fix that." It's just good to see them working together. A couple days ago, one guy was trying to draw a surfboard and he couldn't get it together and he called another student, who just came right over: "This is how you do it; this is what's wrong."



John Porch



Toryian Brooks

I have guys who are natural artists, but they don't have mentors and they don't know anyone else who draws or who paints, so they're trying to figure all this stuff out on their own. And I've learned a lot of stuff over the years, so if I can teach them how to properly put a head on a neck, or the proportions of a human body—anything that would help them become better artists—that makes me feel good, because I didn't have anybody teaching me. I just learned by trial and error and messed up a whole lot of stuff for a long time. So when I went to art school, it really opened my eyes because it was, "OK, this is what it's supposed to look like, this is how it's supposed to work." If I'd had that a lot earlier, I would be a much better artist now.

Meet Betsy MacKinnon, Vertus Counselor!

Vertus Charter School is pleased to introduce Betsy MacKinnon, a clinical social worker and licensed therapist (LCSW-R) who has been Vertus' counselor-in-residence since January 2015. She graduated from Fordham University and lived and worked in Harlem for many years prior to coming to Rochester.



In addition to counseling individual Vertus students, Ms. MacKinnon is piloting an anger-management class and consults with leadership on issues related to school climate and student health. She is very excited to be working with Vertus!

MEET OUR PRECEPTORS

“What’s your favorite thing about working at Vertus?”



Cory Johnson

“Every day is different. Each day the young men at Vertus shine in ways that are unimaginable.”



Justin Bray

“Seeing the success of my students.”



Ben Kadar

“Being able to face different challenges on a daily basis. Every day is different.”



Jamaal Peavy

“Having the opportunity to work with young men who come from where I come from.”



James Daniels

“Watching people grow into better men.”



Shane Duesler

“Watching young men experience success.”



Norris Woods

“Every day there’s a fresh challenge.”

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 Interns Jakeith Mosley, Eric Porter, and Braijon Scott. Please contact Ms. Geier at 585.481.4499 or ngeier@vertusschool.org with any questions or feedback.



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