



Vertus Charter School

COURAGE, LEADERSHIP, RESPONSIBILITY

2 AUSTIN ST.
ROCHESTER, NY 14606

JULY 2015
VOLUME 6

Vertus' Success Stories Make the News This Summer!



In recent weeks, Vertus Charter School has received a great deal of local media attention—and even some national coverage!—for our test scores and our innovative summer programming. See below for a list of recent video and print stories about Vertus, all of which can be accessed from our website and Facebook page.

- “All-boys charter school makes big academic gains,” Kelsie Smith, 13WHAM ABC (July 20, 2015)
- “Charter school students 3D print hands for kids,” Jennifer Johnson, 13WHAM ABC (July 30, 2015)
- “Students’ summer job: Making prosthetic hands,” Justin Murphy, USA Today (July 31, 2015)
- “Getting a grip on new technology,” Justin Murphy, front page of Democrat & Chronicle (August 3, 2015)

To help us spread the word, **please like our page on Facebook** at <http://www.facebook.com/VertusCharterSchool> and share these important stories with friends, family, and community members. Our students deserve to have their accomplishments recognized within Rochester and beyond.

Thank you, as always, for supporting our Vertus men. We are thrilled to see their successes receive so much attention!



SUMMER PHYS ED: Read about our intensive summer gym program, hosted at Total Sports Experience, on p. 3.



SUMMER LITERACY INSTITUTE: See pp. 4-5 for an in-depth report on our collaboration with SUNY Brockport.



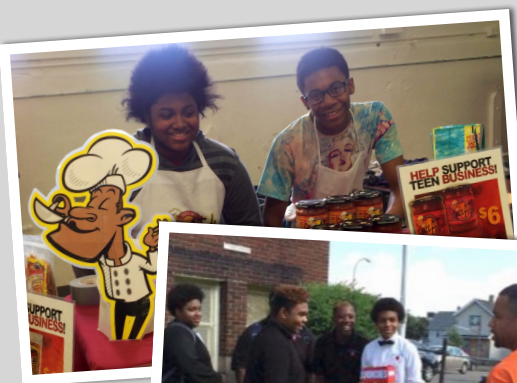
SUGGESTIONS FOR NEWSLETTER STORIES? Contact Naomi Geier at 585.481.4499 or ngeier@vertusschool.org.

At the Crossroads of Entrepreneurship and Nutrition Education: WellVentions at Vertus

Have you ever wondered how the skills of the business world can support nutrition education for teenagers? Just ask Jill Stolt, president and creator of WellVentions. WellVentions is a local non-profit that aims to teach entrepreneurship and marketing skills to teens while also teaching them how to eat healthily and encourage other teens to do the same.

Over the past six months, Vertus students employed by WellVentions have taken part in a variety of hands-on educational experiences designed to teach them about both healthy eating and developing a business. They have learned marketing strategies, commercial videography, storyboarding, and the basics of sales and commissions. They have also learned about healthy food choices through a partnership with FoodLink and have even done some cooking using Chef Gawalli food products developed by other WellVentions students. In addition, Vertus students can be found selling Chef Gawalli products every Saturday at the Public Market and earning commission on their sales.

WELLVENTIONS AT WORK



*Top: Diondre Williams and Savon Scott staff a WellVentions table.
Bottom: Diondre Williams, Je'Taime Bardques, Azaveya Rucker, and David Gayle learn videography from Justin Ortiz.*

Next on the agenda for WellVentions: students will finish storyboarding and filming a rap they have written about healthy eating. We look forward to seeing more creative and health-promoting work from WellVentions in the months to come!

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. Students nominate their peers for consideration and the 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!



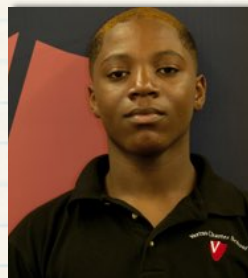
Seth Ramos
June 2015



Deo'vion Grant
Math



Nahcer Scott
Social Studies



Azaveya Rucker
Science



Sharodd Walker
ELA

Man of the Month

June 2015 Scholars



Vertus Charter School

COURAGE, LEADERSHIP, RESPONSIBILITY

SPECIAL FEATURE: SUMMER SESSION 2015

Physical Strength and Strength of Character: PE at Total Sports Experience

At the beginning of this academic year, Vertus faced a challenge common to many new schools: How do we provide Physical Education credits in a building without a gym? Thanks to the generosity of the Gallina family, who own and operate Total Sports Experience, we have been able to use TSE's state-of-the-art facility in Gates as a space for our young men to be physically active this year. During summer session, thanks to the efforts of instructors Nino Pilato ("Coach P.") and Steven Vasbinder ("Coach V."), we have also been able to offer the chance to earn 0.5 PE credit to our Vertus men.

Our summer PE program is split across two sessions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Both sessions run for nearly two hours and follow the same curriculum developed by Coach P.



"Team Bray" poses for a victory shot after winning the football tournament. Left to right: Carey Blocker III, Eh'vion Douglass, Justin Bray, Eric Porter, Jakeith Mosley, Tajhmere Grice, and Daniel Schrank.



Coach V. debriefs with students after a football game.

from basic drills to mini-games and culminating in a tournament every Friday.

Coach P. and Coach V., who are both experienced teachers, also build learning targets centered on character education into each lesson. "Our learning target [last Wednesday] was 'I can demonstrate being a positive leader,' and we talked about what it takes to be a positive leader in sports," says Coach V. At the end of a session, sports drinks are given as a reward for demonstrating that day's character learning target.

"Your guys are good — they're very competitive," Coach V. added. We are proud of our Vertus men for showing strength of character on and off the field this summer!



Jakeith Mosley and Isiah Gill take a breather.

Summer Literacy Institute: Reading, Writing, and Building Relationships

This summer, 32 graduate interns from SUNY Brockport, all certified teachers taking coursework toward a 6-12 literacy certification, came to Vertus Monday through Thursday for five weeks and spent intensive time working with 40 of our students. They did so under the supervision of Brockport adjunct instructor K. Sue Geier, a veteran literacy specialist who guided the Brockport interns as they worked with our Vertus men. This remarkable program, the result of a unique collaboration between Vertus and SUNY Brockport, was both deeply meaningful and highly enjoyable to the many interns and students who participated.

The Curriculum

To provide curricular structure for the summer internship, Sue Geier selected a curriculum called *ID: Voice-Vision-Identity*, developed for Scholastic by Dr. Alfred W. Tatum. Dr. Tatum is a scholar at the University of Illinois at Chicago who has dedicated his career to developing ways to engage young African American men in reading and writing.

As laid out in the *ID* materials provided by Scholastic, Dr. Tatum follows three principles in pursuit of this engagement:



The three novels read by Vertus students during the Summer Literacy Institute.

“Students work with enabling texts, use writing as a mode of social action, and use four foundational platforms to recreate themselves.” These four platforms are

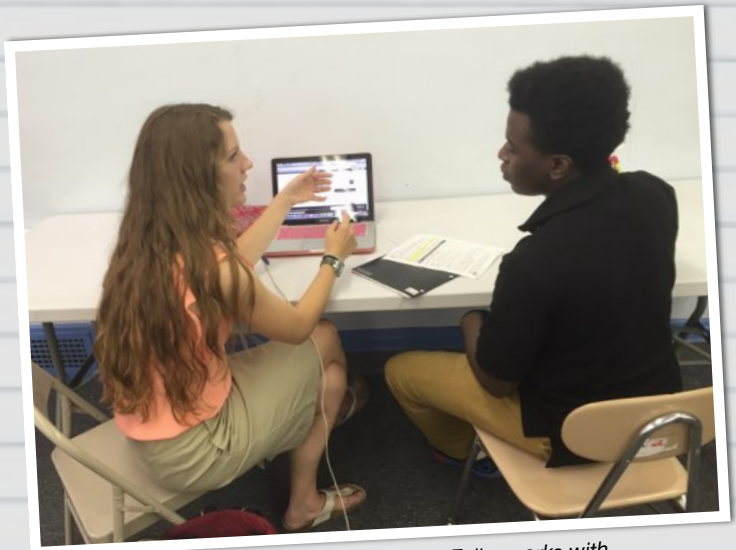
Define Self, Become Resilient, Engage Others, and Build Capacity;

Vertus students worked with the *Define Self* and *Become Resilient* units this summer.

Our Vertus men were given a choice of three novels to read, all of which were selected for their relevance to our times and for being meaningful to high school-age boys: *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie, *Sunrise Over Fallujah* by Walter Dean Myers, and *Behind the Eyes* by Francisco X. Stork. They kept reflective journals in which they did Raw Writes about the novels’ content and made research notes on related topics in the news, prompted by questions such as “Is justice always just?”

The Program

Every day, each intern spent an hour working one-on-one with a Vertus student using the *ID* curriculum. Some interns also worked with a second student; others assisted in courses taught by Vertus teachers or helped students in the Learning Lab. During



Brockport intern Rebekah Feller works with Vertus student Desmond Brown.

each *ID* session, interns and students read together from the student’s chosen novel, wrote together in response to their reading, did word study for academic vocabulary and spelling, and discussed issues raised by the book and other curriculum materials.

The interns were also responsible for developing detailed lesson plans each day, with targeted instructional goals for each student based on assessments and observations. During this process, interns came up with their own supplemental activities to help students grow in the areas that needed the most attention. They also guided Vertus students through their novel-related research and, at the end of the Institute, each intern and Vertus student submitted a polished piece of writing to be considered for publication in the first edition of Vertus’ new literary magazine.

The cornerstone of the program is the development of a literacy relationship, which instructor Sue Geier defines as “a way to grow together as literate people.

The interns and students read together, write together, find new words to study together, and share their thoughts and perspectives through reading a novel and talking about a theme together. Many students have never had someone say to them, 'What do you really think about this? What would you like to say about that? What does this mean to you?'—and that's what makes reading and writing come alive."

The Experience

In reflecting on what they gained this summer, both Vertus students and Brockport interns praised the one-on-one time that is at the heart of the Summer Literacy Institute. "What I really like is that working one-on-one is a safer environment for learning; it's safer than being in a classroom and being asked to read out loud," said intern Gabrielle Marianetti. "One of my students did not want to read out loud to me at all when we started, but now he'll read a whole chapter to me out loud because he trusts me. I think they can extend themselves because they're in a place where they feel safe to learn something new."

Intern Cara Accorso added, "I really enjoyed working with my student. Now



Vertus student Ricky Bogan takes a break with Brockport intern Nora Preller.

that he's interested in our book, he wants to keep reading—he asked if we could keep reading it together after this program. Every day we keep having deeper conversations and he keeps wanting to write more and more, so I can definitely see the growth."

Vertus student Carlos Gonzalez, who works with Ms. Accorso, agreed with her assessment. "I feel like I've been doing a lot more work with a literacy tutor, both in the classroom and doing Edgenuity, and I feel like my progress is definitely getting better on Edgenuity." Adonis Garcia, another Vertus program participant, praised the one-on-one time with his intern, Kaitlyn Federico: "You focus more, and it helps you focus on

the things you need to focus on. I learned about 15 new words and I remember their definitions. I read at a more fluent pace—I got better at that—and whenever I write, I speak as if it was me. I'm a stronger writer. My grammar and punctuation and spelling—it's amazing." Staff at Vertus also took note of positive changes this summer: "I've seen students more engaged and more willing to attack their academics. I think that giving these guys that one-on-one time has been really, really positive for them," said Dean Ricky Norris.

As the program winds down, we look back with gratitude on a successful Summer Literacy Institute and hope for more in summers to come!



Brockport intern Sarah Lawson reads with Vertus student Quincy Clayton.



Brockport intern Nicole Pettrone strikes a pose with Vertus student Keith Bryant.

Thank You, Brockport Interns!

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the SUNY Brockport graduate students who so generously shared their time, attention, enthusiasm, and knowledge with our Vertus men.



Cara Accorso
Courtney Altenbach
Kelly Bellamy
Nicole Berntsen
Kacie Castle
Katie Coulon
Maribeth Doyle
Lindsay Falzano
Alicia Federico
Kaitlyn Federico
Rebekah Feller

Ashley Fotopoulos
Daniel Greco
Lisa Haller
Matthew Heins
Tara Jackson
Kaitlyn Johnson
Sarah Lawson
Gabrielle Marianetti
Jessica Martorana
Michelle Matteson
Cody Miller

Rachel Orenberg
Nicole Pettrone
Nora Preller
Jennifer Raponi
Adriana Rosengreen
Jami Saladin
Amanda Winans
Jamie Wojtowicz
Kimberly Zimmer
Sarah Zink

In Their Own Words: e-NABLE Students on What They've Learned in the Workplace

"I think I've learned a lot dealing with controlling certain stuff, like behavior issues. If there was an issue with a certain person, usually, before I had the job, I would say something and end up getting into confrontation, but now if something bad does happen, I just leave it alone. At the end of the day, it's not my job to be arguing with people."

—Charles Ruffin

"I learned that you have to communicate with other people to have a say in the project you're doing, and that you don't have to be friends with your workmates, but you do have to work with them."

—Je'Taime Bardques

"What I've learned is to be respectful—even though you might not like some people, show them respect—and keep your head up. Things will get better."

—Spencer Burns



Charles Ruffin, Spencer Burns, and Je'Taime Bardques

"What I learned about having a job this summer is that you've gotta have time management. You come on time for work."

—Christian McClain

"The thing that I've learned is patience and teamwork, and being able to work with others—like, how to really cooperate well."

—Giovonni Cintron

"Coming on time is important, and working well with others so you don't get fired, that's important too. And you have to listen to the managers and not argue back to them."

—Seth Ramos



Seth Ramos, Justin Hampton, Antonio Rucinski, and Justin McGill

"What I've learned about having a job is that, you know, you've gotta be more serious about your workplace and keeping up with your work. Because in school, you can slide by a lot of stuff easy, but at work, you've gotta be on your game—like, really on your game—and you've gotta complete your work."

—Justin Hampton

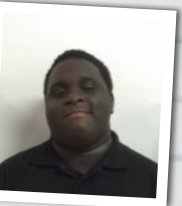
"What I've learned is how to resolve a conflict between me and somebody that I'm working with. So sometimes one of us may have an idea and the other may not like that idea, so we work together and try to figure out how we can combine the ideas or come up with a different one together."

—Antonio Rucinski

"What I learned is being more responsible and more organized, and having better time management. What I also learned is having better teamwork and working together as a team, because two brains are better than one."

—Lashawn Cason

"It really taught me a lot of responsibility, and it also motivated me and taught me discipline, and it was really enjoyable. And I'm glad it taught me how to be a respectful, responsible young man: working with my coworkers, listening to my boss, and showing up on time."



Christian McClain

—Justin McGill

"I learned way more responsibility than what I normally would have. You and your coworkers might not agree to a lot of things, but you guys have to have resolution to figure it out. And you gotta make sure you're on track, help others that need help—not only be selfish and try to get the work done, but go around and ask people if they need help. And be respectful and be responsible."

—Adonis Garcia

"What I learned is having responsibility and being able to make it on time and be active in the workplace, stay focused, and get the money."

—Lee Cooper



Giovonni Cintron, Lee Cooper, Lashawn Cason, and Adonis Garcia

e-NABLE Program instructor Elizabeth Jackson is one of several LibreCorps students doing Humanitarian Coop work this summer through RIT's FOSS@MAGIC program, supported by gifts from Red Hat and AT&T.

Vertus Welcomes Three New Teachers and Two New Preceptors for Fall 2015



Gary Mandell
Preceptor

"I'm looking forward to getting to know our young men and helping them succeed."



David O'Bryan
English Teacher

"I'm really excited to be here at Vertus—I look forward to working with all the faculty and students."



Tina Harrity
Special Ed Teacher

"I'm looking forward to working with all the staff and students this year."

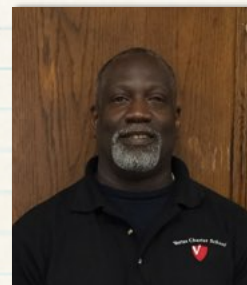
Mr. Mandell, one of Vertus' newest preceptors, grew up in Henrietta and on the west side of Rochester. He holds degrees from MCC, SUNY Geneseo, and SUNY Brockport and is a K-6 certified teacher. Mr. Mandell was the Academic Coordinator at Hillside Children's Center before joining the Vertus team; he looks forward to working directly with students again! When he's not at school, he loves to fish, play with his two children, and practice archery.

Originally from Harlem, **Mr. Wright**, another of our new preceptors, has called the Buffalo area home for the past several years (and currently commutes more than an hour to Vertus every day!). A graduate of Catholic schools, Mr. Wright is a deacon in his church and works with both Safety Ministry and Shofar Ministry. He is also the creator of the MAN (Mentoring And Nurturing) Program for at-risk youth and citizens reentering from incarceration. In his spare time, he likes to bowl, swim, listen to music, write, and spend time with his wife and four children.

Mr. O'Bryan, Vertus' new English teacher, grew up in Fulton, NY, just outside of Syracuse, and studied at Syracuse University and Oswego State before moving to New York City and teaching English for ten years. He was inspired to become a teacher by some of his professors at SU because "the way they taught made me look at reading, writing, and literature in a completely different way." Mr. O'Bryan enjoys being outdoors, lives in a very old farmhouse that requires a lot of maintenance, and loves to spend time with his dog and his family.

Our new math teacher, **Mr. Doell**, grew up on the northwest side of Rochester, where he went to both Aquinas and School of the Arts. His degrees are from MCC, Clark University, and the University of Rochester, and he is currently studying at St. John Fisher as well. Mr. Doell's previous jobs include tutoring math at East High School and substitute teaching at School of the Arts. When he's not at school, he likes to write poetry, do stand-up comedy, and run. (He has completed the Rochester Marathon seven times!)

Born and raised on the west side and in Greece, **Ms. Harrity**, our new Special Education teacher, is a lifelong Rochesterian. She is an alumna of MCC, SUNY Brockport, and Roberts Wesleyan. History is her favorite subject because "it's a living, breathing discipline—to understand current situations in our world, we need to be able to analyze and understand situations from the past." In her free time, Ms. Harrity enjoys reading, gardening, spending time with her husband, traveling, and playing with her three kids and her dog.



Jerome Wright
Preceptor

"I'm looking forward to changing boys into men."



Jeff Doell
Math Teacher

"I'm excited to be working here—everyone seems really hard-working and dedicated. I have high expectations."

MEET OUR CO-FOUNDERS



Dr. Leigh McGuigan
CEO

"I love seeing what young men from the inner city of Rochester can accomplish."

Dr. McGuigan, better known around Vertus as "Dr. Mac," is one of the country's experts on school design and educator quality. Before co-founding Vertus with Mr. White, she was Interim Executive Director of ROADS charter high schools, innovative new schools serving overage, under-credited, at-risk youth in Brooklyn and the Bronx.

Prior to her work at ROADS, Dr. Mac served as The New Teacher Project's Vice President of Strategy, Systems and Policy, where she worked with state departments of education, urban school districts, and charter management organizations to improve educator performance. Before joining TNTP, Dr. Mac supervised twelve innovative schools in the Cleveland school district, including a groundbreaking high school for at risk boys. She has also been both a banker and a lawyer, serving as Senior Managing Director at Bank One and practicing law in Washington, D.C. before starting her career in education.

Dr. Mac holds a B.A. from Duke University, a J.D. with high honors from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a Ph.D. in Educational Administration from Ohio State University.

Mr. White is one of the country's experts on urban school culture. Before co-founding Vertus with Dr. Mac, he founded Cleveland's Citizens Academy, a U. S. Department of Education National Blue Ribbon School and one of the highest-performing urban elementary schools in Ohio. In 2009, the Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools named Perry the Ohio Charter School Leader of the Year.

Prior to founding Citizens Academy, Mr. White was a clinical social worker at Children's Aid Society and Mount Sinai Hospital's Adolescent Health Center in East Harlem. He was Assistant Director of a small school for troubled teens, led a Summer Youth Employment Program, designed and implemented an innovative drug abuse prevention program, and provided clinic and school-based counseling and psychotherapy. Mr. White later served as an adjunct faculty member at Case Western Reserve Medical School's Adolescent Center.

Mr. White has a B.A. from Antioch College, a Masters in Social Work from Smith College, and completed all coursework toward a doctorate in Urban Education Policy at Cleveland State University.



Perry White
Director of External
Affairs

"I love how, more and more, our students believe in themselves."

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.