

March 2010 PAGE 4

## More Updates from VSAC

*Tia Ganguli*

### Introducing our new Start Where You Are motivational speaker

Vermont Student Assistance Corporation's (VSAC) Outreach Program is excited to announce the hiring of its new motivational speaker, Liam Danaher. Liam will travel around the state to inspire students to think about, talk about, and take action on going to college, following their dreams, and connecting school to the real world. While Liam will focus mainly on 11<sup>th</sup> grade students, he will be available to speak to other grade levels as well. To schedule a presentation for your school, call 1-800-660-3561 and ask for Outreach.

### VSAC Voices Project

People throughout Vermont and the United States continue to voice their support for the services and guidance provided by VSAC. More than 1,100 e-mails detailing the ways VSAC has helped customers obtain education after high school have been submitted to the VSAC Voices Project. These e-mails come in response to the federal government's proposal to eliminate the Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) program. To read sample letters and learn more, visit [www.vsaivoices.org](http://www.vsaivoices.org).

### Coming soon:

#### Vermont Career Gateway Enhancements

During the past year, the VSAC Career Planning Initiatives (CPI) team has made extensive enhancements to the Vermont Career Gateway Web site for educators, counselors, and community members. Our new version, "Start Where You Are Professional: Vermont's Career Gateway," will enable educators to find high-quality resources more quickly, while being able to save favorite resources for easy accessibility in the future. The enhanced site provides user-friendly access to

lesson plans, activities, information, and research around career planning and development.

### College Pathways Registration is Open

Encourage your high school sophomores and juniors, and their parents, to attend one of VSAC's three College Pathways events. Students and families get a full day of **FREE** workshops on everything from applying to college and admissions essay-writing to searching for scholarships and financing college. Consider posting [www.vsa.org/CollegePathways](http://www.vsa.org/CollegePathways) to your school's Web site or e-mailing the link directly to your families.



### Spotlight On...Tanya Sousa

*School Counselor, Barton*

We know that counselors in Vermont are an eclectic group. Tanya Sousa has taken some of her many interests to a new level with Radiant Hen Publishing. Read on to see the interview questions we recently asked her. (photo: Tanya receiving 2005 New School Counselor of the Year from then VtSCA president Greg Martin.)

March 2010 PAGE 5

## Spotlight On...Tanya Sousa

*Continued from page 4*

**Us:** Explain what Radiant Hen Publishing is all about.

**Tanya:** Radiant Hen is a children's book publishing company. Our mission is to promote awareness of agriculture, especially local and organic eating/growing, ecology, and Vermont people and places. Within each story, be it a picture book or an illustrated children's chapter book, we also promote ideas of kindness and good character. However, those ideas are embedded IN the stories, and don't slap the reader in the face. Another of our key missions is to promote new, promising Vermont authors and artists. We only work with Vermonters, but the books are already selling to other states and other countries. One of our books went to Tanzania in the hands of a teacher working with children on growing their own food. That's amazing to me! It's also important to mention that some of the books have a companion curriculum. For instance, Ray Perkins' book, *The Mystery of the Silver Statue*, has curriculum about Roger's Rangers and other Vermont-based topics within the story that may be used in middle school social studies classes.

**Us:** How did you get from School Counseling to writing and publishing?

**Tanya:** I actually graduated from Johnson State College with a BFA in Writing and came to counseling later. I worked my way through college writing for area daily newspapers and later published in anthologies and magazines. Writing is a communicating art, and it made perfect sense to me that counseling would suit my personality too-- words are dear to me, and I like to share that skill and interest with others. After years of freelance writing on the side, I spoke to some colleagues about starting our own publishing company. We had so much experience and knowledge among us, and all believed in literacy and trying to make the world a better place, so the idea of Radiant Hen was born.

It's been nothing but joy for me from day one! Howard Mosher has glowingly endorsed one of our upcoming titles and wants to help promote it across the nation as he makes his own upcoming 100 city tour; Nell Newman of Newman's Own Organics has endorsed one of our picture books; Vermont Teddy Bear Company is bundling one of our picture books with a new children's toy bear they've created--I think this is what I want to do "when I grow up".

**Us:** Do the two careers ever meet or mingle? How?

**Tanya:** Oh yes! I've used our picture books for wellness education with primary grades, reading the books and doing activities around them. I've had our illustrators come to the school and do career presentations, and I'm doing a half-day series of workshops on publishing/authoring/illustrating with one of our illustrators at the Holland School in March. One great project was having our seventh grade "Wellness" class read one of the picture books and create activities and a presentation around it, which they then shared with the kindergarten and first grade. Also, I'm sure I don't need to say how much my job has influenced what I'm trying to promote and the topics I write on or help choose for our titles! The kids at school are my motivating factor.



*(Tanya reading her first picture book, Fairy Feast to a young fan at a book signing at Sterling College in Craftsbury)*

March 2010 PAGE 6

## Spotlight On...Tanya Sousa

*Continued from page 5*

**Us:** How many books per year will you be producing?

**Tanya:** In 2009, we technically came out with three, and in 2010, we'll have at least three. It looks like three is the magic number for now! We're small and have a very tiny budget, but we've done a lot already within year one.

**Us:** What unexpected perks have come from your new adventure?

**Tanya:** I'd have to say that meeting many, MANY like-minded people has been the most amazing thing. Instead of seeing such people once in awhile, I'm surrounded with people who care, people who are artistic, people who love words--it's simply amazing. I don't know when I've felt so fulfilled.

**Us:** What advice can you give other school counselors who want to do something "on the side"?

**Tanya:** I'd say be sure to choose something that enriches you and balances your work as a counselor. After a series of very difficult years in counseling, with events I could have never imagined facing, I was feeling very burned out and ready to leave. This has completely changed my career and breathed fresh life into it, renewing me. One thing feeds the other, but they are just different enough to keep things interesting. I wouldn't choose something just for money, but for joy. Counseling is so intense that the "other thing", in my opinion, should absolutely be healing. And if there's a dream someone has, do it! Why not?

**Are you or do you know a school counselor who is doing something unique and/or awesome either within the counseling program or on the side? Let us know for our upcoming Spotlight features. Write to [sherryluss@yahoo.com](mailto:sherryluss@yahoo.com) with your ideas.**



## Who Are Your VtSCA Board Members?

Take a Look. Then think about joining, too!

President: Brian O'Farrell, St. Johnsbury K-8  
 President Elect: Sally McCarthy, JSC Liaison  
 Past President: Jeannie Denson, Barnet Elementary  
 Treasurer: Karen Collman, Riverbend Career Ctr.  
 Membership: Kara Pawlusiak, Colchester Middle,  
 and Monika Reis, Walden K-8  
 Newsletter: Sherry Lussier, Orleans K-8  
 Conferences: Roger Forando  
 Govt Relations: Meaghan Parker, Johnson Elem.  
 and Betty Hughs, Rochester K-12  
 Awards Chair: Marie Eddie, Middlebury Car. Ctr.  
 School Counseling Model: Cindy Edson, former  
 president, Hartford High School  
 Secretary: Nerissa Edwards, Reading Elementary  
 DOE Liaison: Andrew Hudacs  
 VSAC Liaison: Jerry Cassells

## Update from The State

*Andrew Hudacs*

Hello School Counselors! My name is Andrew Hudacs and I am a Program Coordinator for the Vermont Department of Education (DOE). One of my duties is to serve as a liaison between school counselors and the VT DOE as part of our continuous effort to provide quality services for all Vermont students. This role includes providing professional development opportunities and technical assistance to school counselors. As a former school counselor in both Enosburg Falls and Hinesburg, I have a great appreciation for the impact school counselors can have on supporting student health, academic achievement, and the school community. If you would like to contact me, I can be reached at 828-3892, or [andrew.hudacs@state.vt.us](mailto:andrew.hudacs@state.vt.us). Have a great spring!