

Vermont Works for Women Gives Women a FRESH start!

Two new programs at Vermont Works for Women are expanding training and employment opportunities for local women.

FRESH Food is a culinary on-the-job training program. Led by Kitchen Manager Kali Alvarez, trainees learn all aspects of the catering and food preparation business by making healthy, nutritious meals for area daycare centers and supplying pork dumplings to A Single Pebble restaurant. Feedback from both the restaurant and day care centers has been positive. Regarding the meals her child is now receiving from FRESH Food, one parent at Robin's Nest daycare had this to say:

"I just wanted to tell you how amaz-

ing the lunches are! Please send my thanks to the people who are creating such fun, interesting and healthy food for my kids. They can't stop telling me how every day they are in the "clean plate club!" As a busy mom who works hard to provide nutritious food for my kids, it's really great to know that they are getting a great, healthy lunch at school!"

FRESH Food has capacity to expand! If you know of a daycare center who would be interested in their services, or if you know a woman interested in this training, please contact Kali Alvarez at (802) 655-8900 ext 116 or kalvarez@vtworksforwomen.org.

FRESH Energy provides on-the-job

training in the field of energy efficiency and renewable energy. The program, launched in 2009, trains women to perform home energy audits, provide weatherization services, and install solar trackers (thanks to a partnership with All Earth Renewables and J.A. Morrissey).

FRESH Energy's BPI Certified Auditors will show you how you can get money back on energy saving measures like insulation and air sealing with Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Incentives from Efficiency Vermont. To schedule a Home Energy Audit today, contact Maura Campbell at (802) 655.8900, ext 506 or mcampbell@vtworksforwomen.org.

Big Picture South Burlington: School within a school

by Sarah Bertucci for *Linking Learning to Life*

How can high school inspire and empower our young people to be confident, contributing members of an ever-changing world? Big Picture South Burlington (BPSB) is an innovative school-within-a-school at South Burlington High School that is committed to answering this question every day.

At Big Picture South Burlington, students work with faculty to design their own individualized curriculum based on their passions, skills, and goals. Students learn through internships, independent projects, workshops, travel, and group experiences such as our yearly service learning trip. Students intern at organizations ranging from farms to fashion-design firms. One of our students taught mindfulness techniques to UVM professors interested in researching the techniques' ef-

fectiveness. Another has become a featured artist for Flashbags. Our students continue on to every type of post-secondary option, including enrolling in competitive Universities, entering the workforce directly, and embarking on traveling experiences.

How does BPSB create an educational environment that allows such exceptional student experiences? A big part of the answer stems from the Big Picture motto that "Education is Everyone's Business." We have amazing community partners, internship mentors, and volunteers who work with our students, inspiring them by being models of passionate, successful adults. Our close partnership with Linking Learning to Life has been pivotal to finding good internship placements and providing collegial relationships between BPSB and LLL staff members working

towards shared goals. We have found mentors and community organizations that generously contribute to our students, and those individuals and groups receive youthful energy, work, and perspective in return.

BPSB balances a relentless commitment to meeting each individual student's needs with a focus on sharing our practices to improve education for all students. We are part of a network of Big Picture schools that includes nearly 100 schools worldwide. Six of our students are presenting at the NESSC conference about their BPSB experience and the leadership they have taken to impact key decisions about our school. We envision an educational system that works to ensure the success of each individual student and the communities of which they are a part. Please contact sarah@bigpicturesb.net for more.