

Compiling this issue generated all sorts of nostalgia and pride.

Heading into our ninth year, the legacy of our efforts becomes more evident. I find that these notes, collectively, are compelling evidence that North Star is a good idea. All of these people trusted themselves to grow outside of traditional schooling, and they are thriving. The recent experience of calling or emailing each of these young people and having them warmly respond with a sense of being North Star alumni gives me immense satisfaction.

Given the large set of notes included, I have chosen to pull one story to serve as our current "prototype." Grant Wicks is leaving North Star after a three-year membership, and, at age 17, represents many of the themes that best

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liberated

News from North Star alumni

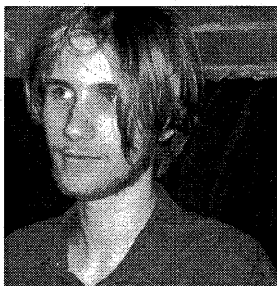
..... 1996-1997

Jake Abernethy, 23 (graduated MIT 2003). *The last five months for me have been quite exciting. I got a bit bored of being in Boston around January. I had sent my applications out to grad school by then, and I was looking for something else to do before probably being in grad school in September. I had been learning French for the past year at that point, and I was wanting to start actually trying to survive in a French speaking-country. I began looking around for some kind of job in France, and very quickly found perhaps the most perfect position I could have imagined.*

Theos, a professor at a business school called INSEAD, a very famous business school just outside of Paris, was looking for someone for exactly three months, which is exactly the amount of time I had available (I had another project planned for July). He is working on some research that has to do with the mathematics behind how companies write surveys to do market research, and was looking for someone with exactly my background to help. Not only that, he was willing to avoid the whole visa process, which can take several months to get settled, and hired me as a contractor, so I don't have to pay taxes or go through much

represent this model.

Grant attended school successfully through the seventh grade. He and his mother would not have considered homeschooling an option without North Star. For three years, Grant has been a central figure at North Star. Now, instead of heading into his junior year of high school and the peak of the college anxieties that go along with that territory, Grant is independently developing his musical interests in a challenging yet relaxed way. In the past year, Grant has recorded seventeen songs he has composed or arranged for the



Grant Wicks

bureaucracy. Anyway, Theos ended up being the coolest boss I could have imagined, as we work very well together, and he loans me his apartment and his car when he is out of town!

In July, I had another project planned for some time ago. I have been somewhat involved with this Israeli/Palestinian coexistence project that a friend of mine from MIT, Yaron Binur, founded about a year ago. We put together a summer camp for 15 Israeli and 15 Palestinian high school students, and we taught them Software development using Java. I put together their website, and was one of the instructors, among other things. Anyway, the project was a huge success, I think, and was also a great experience. You can see our website at www.m-e-e-t.org, and you can read a little article about us here:

http://www.ujc.org/content_display.html?ArticleID=12179

Theos also decided to fund me for another month here, so I am spending August and beginning of September here in France. I am going to be finally returning to the U.S. on Sept. 9th. After that, I will be starting a Ph.D program in Computer Science at University of Chicago.

Raf Anzovin, 22 (Anzovin Studios, Amherst). Over the previous year, I was a lead animator on Hasbro's GI-Joe: Valor vs. Venom, in which a cast of toys look grim and beat up on some big monster or other. Then I took a break and directed my own live-action short horror film. I'm about to start work on Action Man, which is kind of like GI-Joe with cool British accents, and another animated short. Also, my Dad survived cancer and heart surgery (at the same time), I fell in love for the first time (unrequitedly), and I learned how to cook (in a very limited way).

Abby Baines, 20, will graduate with her Associate's Degree from HCC in Communications

this year. She is currently the Head Editor of the college's literary magazine, Pulp City. She has been focusing much of her energy on art. Abby has also been active with Amnesty International and working at the college bookstore.

Michael Brooks, 21, finished his first year at Bennington College but would like to transfer to a more international school. He is spending the fall living in Amherst, working for the Valley Arts Festival showcasing youth talent, and working on various political campaigns.

Willow Hersh, 22. I am currently a senior at UMass, where I reside in one of the dorms on the hill. I am enjoying school immensely, and am continuing towards my goal of becoming an elementary school librarian. I am still an avid and voracious reader of sci-fi/fantasy novels, and enjoy making miniature dragons and wizards. A huge fan of LotR (Lord of the Rings for the non-geeks among the readers), I have loved the books for years and am obsessed with the movies. I'm even teaching myself elvish, and can read and write using the elven alphabet created by J.R.R. Tolkien. I have plans to do some traveling out of the country after I leave UMass, but nothing definite yet, followed by graduate school. I am in a wonderful relationship, and loving my life more each day. Thank you to North Star for helping me get started on this path. (Willow taught a Fantasy Books and Elvish class at North Star this past year through the work-study system.)

Mike Hickey, 22, was recently promoted to Manager of Valley Bicycles in Amherst, where he has been working since age 18. (The owner, John Coull, is on North Star's Board of Advisors and called me with this information.) Mike says he "does pretty much everything" at the store, is very happy with this situation, and has recently moved to Northampton near his mother.

guitar. Last year he took a jazz performance class at Hampshire College, and this fall the professor invited him to continue his involvement by taking a music theory course. Meanwhile, Grant has held an internship at a local guitar repair shop, and he has recently built his own guitar. Outside of his music interests, Grant has been babysitting a seven-year-old family friend with special needs. He continues other personal academic pursuits, and eventually fully expects to attend a music school for college. First, he feels he has two years to enjoy himself and his family here in the Valley. I contrast Grant's experience with my own competitive high school experience, and I marvel at his maturity. As a representative of our

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Kara Lewantowicz, 23 (graduated Colorado State, 2003). I currently reside in southern Colorado; the semi-arid deserts and the mountains have enraptured me with their wildflowers and avifauna. I work for a small, woman-owned, telecommunications business as the Human Resources Director and bookkeeper.

It has been almost three years since my car accident and my rehab continues on a weekly basis. I am slowly letting my aspirations go for a job in Wildlife Biology and am beginning to acquire new aspirations for wanting to help people. I volunteered for a physical therapist last fall and will continue to explore this option. We will see where another year takes me!

Chris Masterjohn, 22 (graduated UMass, 2003). Chris Masterjohn has completed his pre-med studies and will be taking the MCAT later this year. He is working on a website www.aboutcholesterol.chrismasterjohn.com about the benefits of cholesterol-rich foods, and studying to become a personal trainer. Chris also wrote, "You know, I wish I never went to college. I wish I applied the same critique of high school to college, and spent more time out of school. I think I spent too short a time unschooling and would have benefited greatly by doing it for several years."

Nathanael Miksis, 22. I will be starting my fourth and final year this fall at the University of Massachusetts, in the Departments of Economics and Political Science. Over the summer, I have been interning with the Markets Development group at ISO New England in Holyoke. ISO-NE is the non-profit independent system operator for New England ("The people behind New England's Power," www.iso-ne.com). Since it was created in 1997, ISO-NE has had the primary twin roles of building and overseeing the deregulated wholesale electricity markets as well as managing the minute

by minute, and even second by second, operations of the electric grid. In other words, making sure the lights stay on in both the short and longer term.

During the last few months, I have been working with many incredibly dedicated people in the group at ISO-NE on projects related to the ancillary services markets (those services that augment the operations of the central energy market, which clears sales of megawatts). Most of my time has been spent specifically working on the forward reserves market, which was first implemented earlier this year.

This experience has been truly amazing, and I'm grateful to those people both at the UMass Career Services office (which performs an indispensable service) and at ISO-NE, for giving me this opportunity. The time I've spent at the ISO has been so engaging, in fact, I hope to begin work this semester on an independent study project related to public energy policy and grid reliability.

On other notes, I recently moved to Northampton, hope to soon start volunteering with Big Brothers-Big Sisters of Hampshire County, and have really gotten into keeping aquariums.

Ellen Morf, 20. I've been focusing on maintaining myself and really trying to figure out the proverbial "what I want to be when I grow up." Over the summer I quit my yearlong retail job at the Cedar Chest (yahoo!) and returned to babysitting. My intentions now lie firmly in the worlds of academia and theater. I am currently taking three classes at HCC and expect to graduate from there this spring. I hope to transfer to Mt. Holyoke next year to major in Spanish and Politics.

I am also happy to return to North Star to run the Theater program for a second year. I am still heavily involved in SeriousPlay!, my theater company in Northampton. In addition to performing in this company, I am working on its development efforts. Two of my fellow ensemble members and I

eight years of working with teens and families, Grant's experience makes the seemingly odd choice of a single parent to remove her child from a successful school career for the adventures of homeschooling appear to be common sense. Which, of course, it is!

Fall Update

North Star opened with a busy week in early September. The membership is rising from about 27 to the mid-thirties as this issue goes to press. We have pulled together a wonderful staff, led by the increased presence of Catherine Gobron. Catherine is now working nearly three

are working towards launching an after school theater class in Holyoke. Finally, my boyfriend and I have moved to Florence where we are enjoying our garden, our goldfish, our cat, our numerous houseplants, and our new puppy!

Adam Nicotera. Last year, I worked at EarthCorps, a non-profit organization dedicated to restoring and preserving the environment of King County and neighboring areas. I met up with Diana Henion (daughter of the owners of a certain bakery in Amherst, and an EarthCorps alumna) and one or two other people from western Massachusetts, including a fellow former student at what's now the Amherst Regional Middle School. The world's much smaller than I'd thought.

This year, I've worked at Gregg's, a bike shop with three locations in Seattle. I do minor repairs (hoping to learn how to do more) and am one of the lead fitters for stock and custom bicycles in my store. In another month or so, I'll start playing piano for a jazz band led by a friend of mine.

This coming year, I want to be a few time zones to the west or east. EarthCorps has international positions for alumni in the Philippines and in Russia, and I want to be part of at least one of the two programs in the near future. I'm also interested in moving back to the East Coast, although where exactly I want to be on it has yet to be determined.

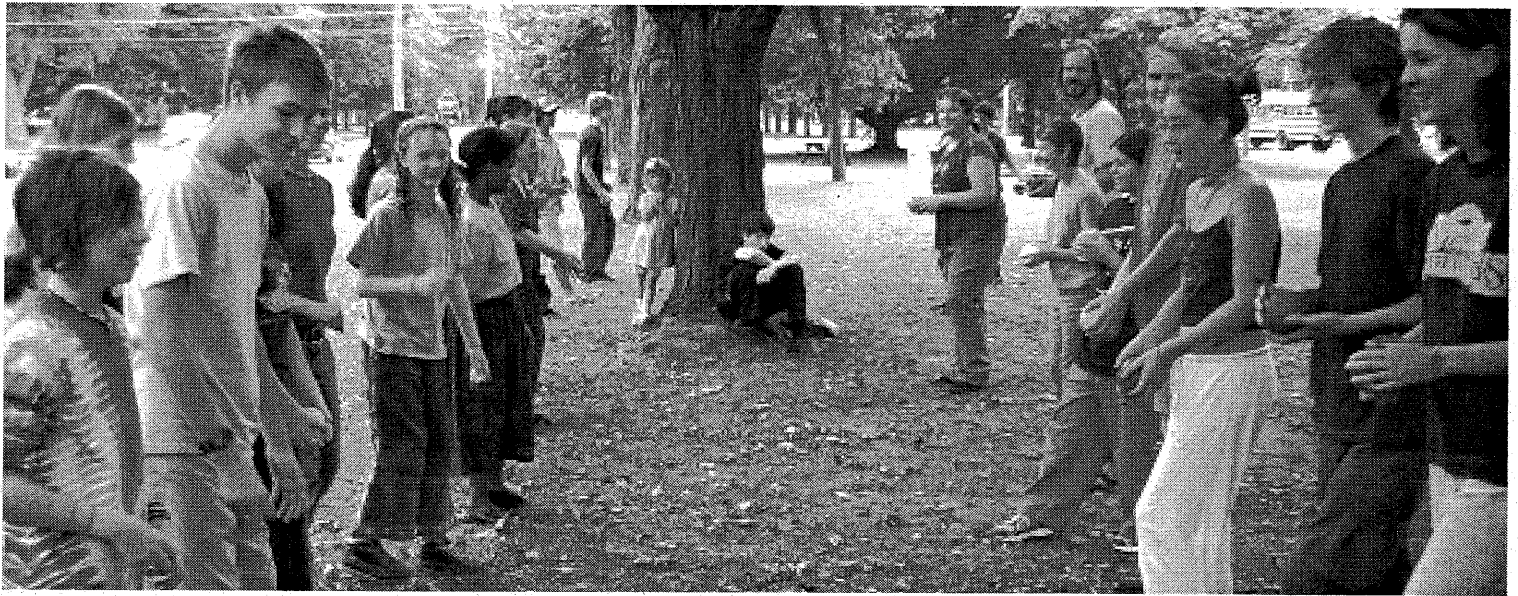
Chris Nopper, 23. Well, things here are drastically different. I am in Spur, Texas working for the Kokopelli bottling company, a start-up mineral water bottling company. They have tanks and facilities here in Texas. I met the owner as a friend at first and he offered me a job. Right now I am in the demo period. I am hoping to get a position in the design department but for now I am working odd jobs. Erv Cameron is along with me we are living

together. He is currently working at the office. The days are long and hard sometimes the sun here is immense. This area is surprisingly liberal and mostly registered Democrats. It is also amazingly small. We are an hour and half from the nearest major city, Lubbock. The food here is amazing, the folks here are extremely nice - there's a lot to be said for southern hospitality.

Currently I am working for a southern Baptist pastor named Ned Hicks. I am transcribing documents for him at the moment. He's the nicest man in the world, believe you me. I think the Southern Baptists' reputation is jaded badly by the media.

Tibet Sprague, 23. This May I reached one of the biggest milestones of my short life: graduation from college. Though in many ways it's just another change, I do feel like the last trappings of dependency have finally fallen away. I am temporarily stripped of external expectations and of the safety net created by a society that told me I didn't need to take complete responsibility for my life yet. Now all my problems are completely my own, my house is really my home, my job is a step along my "career path," and so on.

In my last semester at Brown I took a computer science class that was meant to simulate a real world project in the environment of a small software development company. We were given the assignment to write new software for Brown's on-call shuttle escort system. In April we successfully deployed our web-based dispatch solution, utilizing GPS enabled cell phones to track the shuttles and improve communication between the dispatchers and drivers. Brown loved the software and is using it currently. The unmitigated success of the project led me to wonder if we could sell the software to other schools and dispatch-based services. I raised the idea to the class and recruited three other students who helped me found East Transit Technologies, Inc. (I live on East Transit Street). This summer has been spent incorporating, learning the ins and outs of entrepreneurship and giving



days each week.

Supporting Catherine and me are a host of role players, including interns Laura Stamas and Eron Sandler from Antioch College, returning teachers Susannah Sheffer, Charlie Donahue, Bob Lowry, and Ellen Morf, and a host of college work-study students and volunteers. The organized chaos of the center reflects a team effort!

The North Star Board of Directors is launching a program

sales presentations of our SmartRide software to other schools. So far everything has gone smoothly and I think we have a good chance of succeeding as a company. I had always thought I would get out of Providence immediately after graduation but instead I am going to be here indefinitely, following my long-time dream of running a software development company. The whole thing is crazy: no one gets to follow his or her dream right out of college!

More than anything I've learned to really appreciate the resources and network that a school like Brown can offer those in a position to utilize them. This process would have been ten times harder without the oodles of free help we've received and the connections we've made through Brown. So while I'm not thrilled to still be in Providence, I am thrilled to be my own boss right of college and to be doing something I really am excited about. Certainly my unschooling history played a part in my confidence to take on this amazing opportunity when it plopped down on my doorstep. Wish me luck, and I've always got a couch in Providence if anyone happens to be in the area or for those who might want to check out Brown for college. I highly recommend it.

Greg Stutsman, 22, is a co-founder and co-owner of Andiamo's, a panini sandwich restaurant in Amherst that opened successfully this past year. Among the employees is Paul Hendrick, 22, who is a cook, and he says, "half-manager like all the employees here."

Stephan Theberge, 23. Stephan sent us a brief note describing his current work with the New York Civil Liberties Union organizing protestors to the Republican National Convention in NYC. This work involves working with media, and Stephan sent along this link to the *New Yorker* www.newyorker.com/talk/content/?040823ta_talk_toobin, and his mother reports he has also been on Air America and may be covered by *In These Times*, among others. Stephan's mother also reports that he graduated from Columbia this spring with Honors in Anthropology, which is "a big deal." His thesis is titled, "Everywhere but the Ground: The Spatial Politics of Memory in Capetown and New York City." Stephan is now living in Brooklyn, and he will consider a range of activist jobs once his stint with the NYCLU concludes this fall.

1997-98

Ayla Bailey, 19, spent the summer working on an organic farm, building a rustic Scandinavian log sauna, and serving as the Director of the kids' camp at Dance New England. She also drove cross-country with Kiva Singh, who has moved to Las Vegas. Ayla spent most of last year in Solala, Guatemala. In October, she is going back to Guatemala. She will appreciate any help in securing a visa for her Guatemalan boyfriend to come here.

of outreach and fundraising featuring twice-monthly tours of the center. The tours are strictly informational, and we will not be soliciting funds at those times. We request your help in inviting people to visit North Star through this program. Please call the center if you would like to go on a tour or if you have a friend who would like to sign up.

Note

*As of this issue, we will be publishing **Liberated Learners** on a quarterly (seasonal) basis. We intend to make each issue longer and more descriptive of current North Star activities than in the past.*

Jesse Bailey, 22, is at Clark University studying government, international relations, and history. He went to Cameroon last fall for "self-directed volunteering" with several aid organizations. Jesse is now going into his junior year, and plans to intern in Washington, D.C. in the spring.

Sky Dix, 20, is working at Super John's grocery store, looking for new work as Youth Outreach Worker, leading conferences for U-U young adults, playing guitar and songwriting and recording her music, living with her boyfriend Joe in Greenfield. She recently got her GED. If she doesn't find a good job, she just may move to Louisiana to study blues guitar.

Jordana Harper-Ewert, 23 (graduated Mt. Holyoke, 2002). *In late August I returned from a trip to China. This was an exhilarating opportunity to consider a scholarship opportunity at Beijing University, as well as a thrilling cultural experience and a wonderful chance to explore a beautiful land! I decided to come back to the States and look for teaching jobs this year. I was fortunate enough to have interviews on my return, and was hired on the spot for two jobs - one in Greenfield, and another for a school in Springfield. I considered both strongly, with much appreciation to the people that helped me deliberate. The schools were almost diametrically opposed. Greenfield was a permanent maternity leave position, from November through June, with 18 students in a very comfortable atmosphere, with a school training in Responsive Classroom - a technique that my previ-*



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Note

*(on the arrangement
and abbreviations in
this issue)*

*Alumni are presented
by the year they joined
North Star, and
alphabetically within
that year.*

*Three abbreviations:
UMass is the University
of Massachusetts;
GCC is Greenfield
Community College;
and HCC is Holyoke
Community College.*

*Below:
Beginning the
parade on September 6,
opening day.*

ous employer from last year, the Greenfield Center School, had pioneered! So it offered a natural and easy fit.

Springfield presented another situation. The school is currently the 5th lowest performing school in the district. When I arrived at my interview on a Saturday morning, the principal detailed the past six weeks she had spent scrubbing the floors of the school, repainting the walls, and patching holes punched in the hallways. She had been hired as one of the district's top "Exemplary Principals," known for transforming schools into high-performing ones.

I liked her attitude and I accepted the job in Springfield. I am eager to be part of a real-life school experience that fills out my perspective on education in a very visceral, MCAS-driven environment! I hope that my character education experience,

my excitement about making a difference, the skills and talents I learned at the Greenfield Center School, and some modicum of naiveté will make this year a successful experience for all of the 32 children in my classroom! I will be working with an ELL (English Language Learners) teacher in my classroom because of the high percentage of Hispanic students for whom English is their second language. There are two classes for each grade, and I am on the second story of a grand old brick building on Washington Street, built in the 1700's with a glorious inscription over the door: "In all nations, knowledge is the surest means of public happiness." So, hired on Saturday, accepted on Monday, starting on Wednesday!

Ethan Kramer, 20, is a senior at Lehigh College this year, and, after a fine experience as a business major, is applying to graduate schools in sociology. This summer Ethan discovered a new joy and talent for stand-up comedy, and performed at the People's Pint in Greenfield and The Comedy Studio in Cambridge. Ethan also created two other entrepreneurial undertakings this summer, one related to car detailing and the other involving t-shirts.

Mishy Leiblum, 20. Since I last wrote for *Liberated Learners*, my pursuits have followed a fairly uninterrupted course. I have continued to work at NEARI Jump-Start (a community-based after-school program in Holyoke, MA) and I have continued my undergraduate studies at the University of Massachusetts in the Social Thought and Political Economy program and the Latin American Studies certificate program. This past June, I once again traveled to Guatemala where I tediously chipped away at my Spanish language acquisition between salsa lessons and fruitful trips to the local markets.

This fall, I am excited to be entering into my junior year with a plethora of top-notch courses.



While I am pleasantly anticipating a time in which I will no longer have to balance arbitrary paper deadlines with my busy schedule, I am taking this experience in the academy in a way that I never would have had I landed in college as the result of the standard chronology.

(Mishy has also served on the Board of Directors for North Star and organized our successful spring auction and summer workshop program.)

Miro Sprague, 19. *The past year was the most intense and incredible one of my life. I finally got out of the Pioneer Valley (where I have lived my whole life) and headed to the Big Apple, to study jazz piano at Manhattan School of Music. Being away from home, living in New York, playing and studying with some of the best musicians in the world, all contributed to an amazing growth experience. I learned a lot from living with a roommate, and meeting all the new people. Most of all, I had enormous amounts of fun. Though it was a big shift to start a more structured education, I feel like my unschooling prepared me well for college.*

After my year in New York, I returned to the valley for the summer, to relax and see family and friends. I also performed numerous gigs, trying to save some money for the following year in the city. I returned to New York a couple weeks ago and I'm looking forward to another amazing year. My life is an incredible adventure and I'm enormously grateful for the chance to follow my dreams.

1998-99

Art Baines, 18, is enrolled at GCC, studying computer science, statistics, physics, and pre-calculus. Art holds a job as a peer tutor in math. He worked at New England Natural Bakers over the summer, and still plays lots of computer games.

Jared Barney, 18, will be completing his Associate's Degree in Communications at HCC this year. He has been working in the video lab and tutoring videoediting. He has also been employed by HCC as a landscaper. Additionally, Jared is training for radio work with WMUA. He recently bought a car, and is feeling confident about continuing his college studies at a four-year program next year.

Otis Wheeler, 23, won't be making his occasional visits to North Star this year as he is off to Frieburg, Germany for a study abroad program through UMass. He is an Art History major, and he spent this summer in New York enjoying himself, according to his mother.

Matt Woodland, 20, is mostly working at the Donut Man a block from North Star. (He may have information about the Donut Fairy who often leaves donuts on our doorstep early in the morning). He also holds a job at a gas station. Matt has a fine life, "but without the spice of North Star." He reports that Sarah Hill, 19, also has a fine life, including working at Cinemark in the Hampshire Mall.

Collage/zine-making group, currently meeting on Thursdays.



1999-2000

Milo Ray, 18. *I was at North Star for about three years, and then I went to Simon's Rock College when I was sixteen. But after a year there I figured it was good but too expensive so I transferred to UMass. This year I'm on a leave of absence since I missed the freedom to make my own schedule. College is a bit better than high school, but it's still school. The best thing I got out of going was learning Spanish. This year I look forward to honing my computer skills, becoming a certified EMT, knitting lots of sweaters, learning more carpentry, and having the time to hang out at ACTV filming shows. (Milo offered a screenwriting and a digital photography class at North Star last year.)*

Jennifer Dean, 18, worked this summer at Six Flags as a Head Lifeguard. Last fall she was taking classes at HCC; this fall she is at UMass full-time studying Hospitality and Tourism Management, living on campus. She spent last spring "basically driving my sister Trine to North Star."

Michaela Karle, 17, has continued her interest in bellydancing. She is studying for the GED and considering the massage therapy program at GCC.

Tristan Snow Cobb, 19, went to China for six months to study Shaolin Kung Fu in the Jilin Province. He reports having "a phenomenal time, learning from amazing practitioners, but that the language barrier made things difficult." He traveled on a series of one-week trips through northern part of China, which were highlights of the time there. Prior to this adventure, Tristan worked full time at GreenFields Market to pay for his trip. Now, he has just returned from the Burning Man Festival in Black Rock Desert, Nevada. The festival included 35,000 people involved with "Radical

Self-expression". The festival inspired Tristan to want to learn contact juggling. He is now looking for a steady job. He plans to take a TOEFL (Test of English as a foreign language) course (hopefully in England), and then go to Korea to study martial arts, a center for hapkido, tae kwon do and sun do.

2000-2001

Chaz Alers-Johnson, 19, studied at HCC for a year or more. He took a break to work as a Service Net House Counselor in residential home for the Department of Mental Health in Hadley. He is intending to resume his studies in human resources. Upon reflection, he feels that going to HCC full time at age 16-17 was too much in his transition out of high school.

Vlad Blanton, 16, attended the Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter School for most of last year before deciding to return to a homeschooling approach. This fall he plans to take a Russian Literature class at Hampshire College while studying math on his own. Then he intends to enroll in both math and computer science classes for the fall. Meanwhile, he may also have a job as a network administrator for a computer system at UMass.

Paul Ganssle, 18, works at Service Net as a counselor for people with mental retardation. He is serious about his exercise bike and weight bench. He recently took the SATs, and is taking a writing class at UMass with the idea of becoming a full-time student in the spring.

Rowan Harrison, 20. *There are too many ways to express how glad I am that I did not spend my 16th and 17th year in high school! I am 20 now and I have become a strong advocate of alternate ways of learning and it would not have happened if I had continued on to graduation. I would probably still be in school, sitting in a classroom all day. But now I have a idea of how to live by my own definition of success, and it is to be able to learn what I want, when I want and then use the knowledge to help the world in any small way I can. So right now, to do that, I work with clay, sand, and straw (cob), learning to build sturdy homes out of an abundant resource so some day soon I can help people live in sustainable, beautiful homes!*



Jackie Schulze and Kaise Bollinger, two new students this year

Galen Potter-Bernard, 17, has moved to North Carolina, where he has continued to homeschool and pursue his interest in baseball. He has played for a series of school and summer league teams, including one that went to Florida for a tournament. While he is auditing a sports psychology course and signing up for two classes (psychology and writing) at a local community college this fall, Galen consider himself entering his junior year of high school. Unlike many North Star members, Galen wants to maintain his regular academic course so that he will arrive at a four-year college with full sports eligibility and the same physical maturity as his baseball peers. Meanwhile, Galen is now in his second season as Bat Boy for the Asheville Tourists, a "A" minor league team. This year Galen also has an internship in the Tourists' front office. He expects to eventually go to college in Sports Administration and have a career in Sports Management – when his playing days are over.

Reuben Telushkin, 16, continues to work at WRSI as an intern, where he receives good music and concert tickets in returning for loading music into the computers. He is completing his training at

WMUA (UMass) and expects to have his own show this fall. Meanwhile, Reuben is prepping for the GED, and still draws comics everyday. He is now drumming as well.

Maria Uprichard, 18, is now at GCC full-time. She is studying theater and fine arts. She claims, "It's fun, fabulous, everyone is so nice there, it's a great atmosphere, it's easy to get excited about things there." Maria is catering with Noble Feast in Shelburne Falls, saving up for a car, and still seeing friends from North Star.

2001-2002

Rachel Betchick, 19, spent a semester with the Friends World College program in London. She enjoyed the opportunity to travel to Scotland, Ireland, and Paris more than the academic program itself. This fall she is back in Massachusetts, and taking a series of classes including ceramics, Russian, American Sign Language, and "Serial and Mass Murder." She is working as a lifeguard for the local recreation program where she learned to swim.

Mandala Francisco, 20. *I'm now beginning my third semester at Holyoke Community College as a full time student. My major is presently Liberal Arts. I am exploring my many interests, such as voice and piano, theater, creative writing, dance, and now psychology. I have continued to explore my newfound passion for theater at HCC. So far I have been in Blood Wedding, a tragic yet wonderfully beautiful, poetic, and powerful piece, as well as Pantagize, which was dubbed a farce to make you sad, a tragedy which was told through utter slap stick comedy, a very affective way to gloriously laugh yourself to tears.*

I will be taking an Irish Studies course in

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January 2005. I will be going to a college in Ireland to learn everything I can about the Irish culture in 16 days, such as Irish history, culture, music, folklore, literature, and the language! I am beyond excited. I have always had an unexplainable longing to visit this beautiful and mysterious place.

I have no idea where my path will guide me, but I trust the compass of my heart. My goals for the near future are publishing a book of my poetry and meditations, selling my homemade cards, writing and performing my own music, and becoming a dream therapist.

Billy Girand, 18, has just been hired as prep cook and dishwasher at Circa, a fancy Italian restaurant in Northampton. He plans to go to Kripalu Yoga and Spiritual Center in November for several months as a student and become a teacher-assistant.

Caroline Miklovich, 18, completed her certification for yoga instruction in Amherst, and is now conducting a class in Wendell. She is studying herbiology with her mother, both aiming for certification this year. Caroline is primarily raising her son Eliaah, 1 ½. Life is going well. Eliaah is a lively, smart boy! Caroline has appreciated living with her family and having their support, though she is now seeking her own apartment.

Collin Lally, 17. *So, for the past couple years, I've been here and there, doing this, that, and the other thing. I spent a semester at HCC and received good grades, but in the end, they didn't have what I wanted in terms of programs. Since I left, I've been working on a cribbage program for my computer, an online content management system (like a blog, with a twist), building computers, playing my violin, and designing and building pro-audio equipment. And, of course, I'm still riding my bike everywhere.*

2002-03

Caitlin Cook, 17, completed her first year at GCC, focusing primarily on photography. She spent the summer in Tanzania volunteering in an orphanage. She continues working at India House restaurant and plans to resume her studies at GCC this fall.

Raphie Levy-Moore, 17. *Since I last wrote for Liberated Learners in the spring of 2003, I've been busy with a lot of exciting things. Last year I took classes at Hampshire College (Ancient Greek and Indian Drama), and was even able to earn credits there for free. I also continued with volunteer work and community activism. This summer I studied Latin intensively at UMass, and I hope to pursue it further in the future. This Fall I am going to study full time at Greenfield Community College, and I'll also be busy applying to four-year colleges for fall 2005. I plan on continuing with volunteer work and artistic hobbies, as well as pursuing newfound passions that I hope to carry with me to college.*

Kati Lewantowicz, 18, completed her first year at HCC, and plans to continue full time this fall. She is especially enjoying studying sign language. Meanwhile, Kati has been both working and performing at the Red Door Theater. Aside from acting, she has been a theater camp counselor and stage manager.

Jamie Schoen, 17, spent last year at Walnut Hill, a residential school for serious dancers. Jamie experienced some injuries that limited her dancing opportunities. She reports having "...an awesome experience, like a small college, but it also showed me that I really don't want to dance for a career." This summer she has held three jobs, including registrar for the KO Theater festival at Amherst College, prep cook for the Lord Jeffrey Inn, and staff at East Street Studio. This fall Jamie will enter Greenfield Community College through the

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dual enrollment program that will give her a high school diploma along with the college credit and experience. She expressed surprise reflecting that her high school experience has now become four different one-year adventures (Amherst High School, North Star, Walnut Hill, GCC). It's not what she expected for herself, but it feels like it is working out well.

2003-2004

Jen Eckard, 17, plans to go to Kripalu Yoga and Spiritual Center in November. Until then, she is conducting an Ebay job for a North Star parent, and is busy creating portrait art. She is also drawing wildebeests and zebras. Jen is thinking about starting a rainbow face-painting business. Meanwhile, she has been invited to illustrate a children's booklet for a cancer fundraiser.



Returning members
Sara Estan and Ethan
Matthews

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