

Farming Vermont

By Maria Paula Mugnani

Brattleboro Union High School, Grade 12

"What? The cost of milk rose again?" a consumer moans, scowling at the price tag. "That's ridiculous! It wasn't this expensive just a couple of weeks ago!"

You may have heard complaints similar to this in Vermont or perhaps you are the consumer complaining, but what is important is that while you may have to pay a little more money for milk, farmers are benefiting.

With the way the economy is going, dairy farmers in Vermont are struggling to sell their milk and make a living from their labor-intensive profession. Changes in milk prices reflect fluctuations in the milk market price that, when they rise, put a little more money in farmers' pockets.

And it is not only the changing milk prices that are causing problems for farmers. Prices in feed and equipment are skyrocketing, so some farmers are forced to take measures such as using recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH) to increase milk production in their cows and increase their profits. Although there is debate on whether this stresses cows, the growth hormone is saving a lot of farms that are forced to decide between using antibiotics and growth hormones and selling their farm. To make matters worse, small farms are also forced to compete with much bigger farms in other states, such as Wisconsin. Companies prefer to buy in bulk, so they will choose a bigger farm over a small one. After the milk is pasteurized and sold to consumers, very little of the profit goes back to the farmers. They often receive as little as 10%.

Vermont is known for its liberal views, small towns, and lush green mountains, but also for the farming. It is common to find a farm that has passed from one generation to the next and continues to do business. As people become more aware of the benefits of local and organically grown food, farms are changing their practices. Going organic can give farmers a higher price for their milk, but also creates new expenses. Although known primarily for its dairy farms, Vermont also has goat, llama, chicken and sheep farms, as well as farms that produce fruit and vegetables.

During the summer, people flock to Vermont to buy locally produced food at farmer's markets, where various farms sell their wares and produce. During the summer and autumn, Vermonters go to farms to pick their own apples, berries, vegetables, and other produce.

In other words, farming is very important in Vermont. It makes Vermont the state it is because farms and Vermont residents form a community that unites the whole state. Despite the hard times, we must support agriculture and farming so we can continue to be a healthy, supportive, self-sustaining community.

So next time you want to complain about the price of your carton of milk, think not only of how your money benefits and supports farmers, but also how it benefits and supports you, Vermont and the community.

Editor's note: Milk prices are extremely low at the moment and many farmers are struggling.

THROUGH THE EYES OF ...

YWP students jump into The Lake Champlain Chamber Music Festival

From time to time, YWP corrals a few good young writers and invites them to immerse themselves — and write about — events. In late August, more than a dozen students attended rehearsals, talks, meals and performances at the Lake Champlain Chamber Music Festival led by violinist Soovin Kim. Read more student reflections of the festival at youngwritersproject.org.

Dance of the violin

By Shoshana Silverstein

Homeschooled, Grade 11

(Inspired by the playing of Soovin Kim)

The umber angel
slips gracefully onto
his shoulder
while he tilts
his ear, listening
for its song to begin.
One does not play
the other, but rather
they bow together
and begin a dance
halfway between
tango and tarantella.
His fingers treading
the bow sweeping
across the strings.
I close my eyes
and listen
to the dance of the violin.

Like a stream

By Aliza Silverstein

Homeschooled, Grade 8

Like a stream,
The music
Flows
Quietly
Between banks
Of ferns
And willows,
Running on,
Becoming turbulent,
Fighting
The rocks
And
Almost
Attempting retreat.
Onwards--
O, majestic waterfall!
Racing,
Tumbling,
Knowing
It cannot
Break.
Spreading
From the bottom,
Beating at
The rocks
Ending
Triumphant.

Ready... Set... WRITE!

Welcome to a new year of the Young Writers Project, an independent nonprofit dedicated to encouraging student writing. Each week YWP and this newspaper will feature some of the best student writing in the state.

Support the newspaper; and be sure to give the students feedback — it means a lot to them.

Today we release the first few suggested prompts for the year; for a complete list, visit youngwritersproject.org.

Young Writers Project reaches as many students as possible, engages them to write, helps them get better at it and finds audiences for their best work.

YWP runs a safe Web community at youngwritersproject.org where students share writing, post audio and images, exchange feedback and receive critique from top students at University of Vermont and Castleton State College.

YWP creates Digital Writing Classrooms for teachers to integrate into their curriculum.

This year, YWP will maintain over 30 such sites. Go to ywpschools.net for more.

YWP received its founding support from the Vermont Business Roundtable. Major contributors now include FairPoint Communications; A.D. Henderson Foundation; Amy E. Tarrant Foundation; Bay and Paul Foundations; Northfield Savings Bank; Oakland Foundation; Physician's Computer Company; Queen City Printers; Small Dog Electronics; Vermont Humanities Council; Windham Foundation; and Metz Family Foundation.

This year's prompts came from hundreds of ideas suggested by teachers and students. They are posted on youngwritersproject.org and include a special partnership with the Vermont Stage Company. More partnerships will be announced during the year.

Submit work at youngwritersproject.org by each Friday afternoon.

— Geoffrey Gevalt
Young Writers Project Director

Vermont

By Krista Gay

Leland & Gray Union High School, Grade 9

The cows lie down on the cold, July wet grass
Watching the diamonds rush out from the
Tangerine sky

And find the green bed they sleep on at night.

The tires roll hard against the cold dirt

As the boys rush home

They were gone too long stealing kisses

At the stream.

Little Anna runs around in tall dewy grass

Holding out a Mason jar

To catch the dancing fireflies

That form a night light, even though it won't last.

A squirrel races up a drainpipe,

And dashes across the roof

With all her might she jumps and flies to her tree,

The darkness hiding her

As she scurries to her burrow

To bring her little ones an acorn.

"What a night!" the moon says to the Little Dipper.

"How beautiful those dark green mountains look.

More beautiful than the lights of New York or

The plains of Oklahoma. How beautiful is

Vermont."

2009/10 prompts

Each week YWP offers students ideas to write about. Here are a few of the upcoming prompts.

For the full list: youngwritersproject.org



2. Photo Prompt: Write a story about this photo, taken by Dorothea Lange in California, March 1937, "Toward Los Angeles." (See full photo at youngwritersproject.org.) Alternate: **Back.** "Oh gosh, they're back..." Write a story based on or using that phrase. *Deadline: Sept. 18.*

3. Headline. Write an attention-grabbing news headline and then create a story about it. Alternate: **Listening in.** Take a moment to listen to conversations at school, home or in a public place such as the hallways, cafeteria, playing field, a restaurant or store. Take some of that dialogue and write a story or poem. Fill in the gaps. *Deadline: Sept. 25.*

4. General Submit best non-prompt general writing you have created. This call for general entries is repeated each month and you can use the same "general" term when submitting each time. *Deadline: Oct. 2.*