

9/14/2010 12:40:00 PM

Village School Sees 25% Increase In Enrollment

MARY C. BARCLAY
ADN Special Contributor

ROYALSTON -- The first weekly staff meeting at the Village School for the 2010-11 year was filled with smiles and stories of happy students, happy parents, and the promise of another exciting school year. In addition to the usual reasons to be pleased with a successful opening, the school has seen an increase of 25 percent over last year's enrollment.



STAFF MEETING — There was plenty to celebrate at the Village School's staff meeting to discuss the opening of the 2010-11 school year. In addition to a successful opening day, with many stories indicating the children and their families are settling in, it was noted that this year's enrollment is up by 25 percent, comprised mostly of students from first-time Village School families. As a bonus, the group enjoyed a cake in honor of teacher Kim Barry's birthday. Staff for the year includes, left to right — kindergarten and first grade teacher **Martin Brown** of Royalston, second and third grade teacher **Shannon Johnson** of Orange, fourth through sixth grade teacher **George Bennett** of Warwick and his intern, **Adrianna Raitto**, an Antioch University student of Fitzwilliam, N.H., preschool teacher **Leanne Limoges** of Warwick, Village School Director (and birthday cake baker) **Rise Richardson** of Phillipston, and the birthday girl, preschool teacher **Kim Barry** of Orange.

Photo by Mary C. Barclay

The increase, especially in light of the fact it is comprised of nearly all new, first time Village School families, is particularly rewarding to Village School director **Rise Richardson**. **Rise** is one of the founding members of the 21-year-old independent day school, and feels the increase has been possible at least in part due to improvements in economic comfort that allow for discretionary spending on education.

Shortly after the last of the children left for home, the staff enjoyed a leisurely lunch and chat. The meal was capped with an enthusiastic round of "Happy Birthday" to preschool teacher **Kim Barry**, who busted out laughing at the card created by recently-retired math instructor **Jane Manring**. Director **Richardson's** "famous squash cake" with cream cheese frosting was served with just enough candles for effect.

As is tradition at staff meetings, **Richardson** began with an inspirational reading appropriate for teachers, and then launched into stories from the day. She went around the table asking each teacher to tell her one thing about their day. She prompted by asking was there something that really stuck out in their minds, something particularly good or bad, an event that really caught their attention?

The lack of preschool tears, despite the large group seemed noteworthy to some. The playground "being awash with all those children" seemed to resonate with others. When all

was said and done, however, it appeared to be the consensus that the opening of school could only be described as successful.

As always, the Village School has an exciting slate of activities planned for the fall months, and teachers had an opportunity to refresh their memories on just how much is coming up, and how quickly. Weekly hiking begins Friday at 1:45 p.m. -- with parents invited to join in; the "warm ups" lead to the annual Jacob's Fall Hike during the foliage season.

The year's first Parent Group meeting is Wednesday, Sept. 15, at 8:45 a.m. and also on Sept. 15 and 22, field trips to Sweetwater Farm. The open-to-the-public Curriculum Night is on for Wednesday, Sept. 29, and provides an opportunity for potential families to find out about the school's annual themes, ambitious academics, and interesting cultural experiences.

School supporters and coffee lovers are reminded the Village School Parent Group, in conjunction with Dean's Beans, places monthly orders for an array of coffees, and other fair trades products such as sugars and chocolate products. The Parent's Group profits go toward defraying costs of special programs.

Information is available at the school's website, www.villageschool.to or from Director Richardson at the school, 978-249-3505 or by e-mail, info@villageschool.to.