

# St. Louis 'Chickenologists' Reflect on a Visit to Shelburne Farms

By Sarah Kadden

In the fall of 2011, a team of teachers, administrators, and students from the Maplewood-Richmond Heights (MRH) School District in St. Louis, Missouri came to visit the Burlington School District and Shelburne Farms, a relationship forged through the Society for Organizational Learning (SoL) Education Partnership. Both school districts are deep into transformation and a commitment to Education for Sustainability. Curtis BoClair is a junior at MRH and Kaila Nong is a senior. Both are extraordinarily involved in the life of their school and are "Chickenologists," part of a team of high school students who care for a flock of chickens that live at the district's Early Childhood Center. Kaila is currently the Alpha Chicken, the leader of the chicken club. What follows are short reflections on their trip East.

## Kaila Nong

The trip to Vermont was really eye opening for me, mostly because I had no idea that Vermont was the home to many refugee families. Going to the Sustainability Academy at Lawrence Barnes Elementary school and being able to sit down and work with kids that were so diverse from each other, and me as well, was just an outstanding feeling. But being at the both the elementary and middle school was a great experience because I love seeing other schools and other people with such a passion for sustain-



**Curtis BoClair milks a goat during his visit to Shelburne Farms last fall. (Photo: R. Dillon)**

ability and I got that from our trip. Everything we did in Vermont was a big learning experience whether we were working on the farm or just walking around the town. I hope one day I can return again and see how the schools are doing in their process of becoming more sustainable.

## Curtis BoClair

When you live in an area where your school is the only one putting a real focus on sustainability, it can start to feel like you're alone, or that's just how I felt. Being able to visit Vermont, and the Burlington Schools was a relief to see that other schools are doing some of the same things that we are. Whether it be as simple as composting in the lunchrooms, or bigger, like hosting gardens at their schools. Seeing

what their school district was doing, and seeing how passionate they are, was gratifying. Also learning how Shelburne Farms is a partner with the schools was outstanding. Shelburne Farms is an amazing organization and a beautiful farm, but seeing how they are involved with so many children stuns me. Overall being able to meet so many people that have a huge passion for teaching, learning, and sustainability was great. And becoming partners at growing the idea of sustainability in our communities is even better.

*Kaila and Curtis attend school in the Maplewood Richmond Heights district in St. Louis, MO. Visit the district's website at:*

<http://www.mrhhsd.org/>