This page was exported from - Shelburne Free Press
Export date: Fri Oct 30 7:57:46 2026 / +0000 GMT

Monthly Message: At Streams, discovery is always on the menu

Every summer, for one week, I take off my Executive Director hat and slip on an apron. I teach Blissful Baking, a full-day program where kids get their hands deep into flour, sugar, eggs, and butter. Lots of butter. But it's never just about baking?at least not for me.

The program is structured a bit like The Great British Bake Off, which is actually where I got the idea. Each day has a theme: bread day, pie day, cookie day, and then two full days of layer cake baking, designing, and decorating. They knead. They roll. They measure. They whip. The energy is focused but joyful?like a well-loved kitchen during the holidays.

They work in pairs, sharing workstations and learning to take turns with tools. At first, that part can be tricky. Sharing space and slowing down enough to collaborate isn't always easy. The truth is, sometimes I'm pulling my hair out from repeating myself a hundred times. But teaching this class keeps me grounded in our mission and reminds me why I love what we do at Streams.

At our core, we are in the business of discovery.

It's like archaeology?not of ancient bones or lost cities, but of human life.

A child walks in with layers built up by fear, distraction, or self-doubt. And then, slowly, through creativity and connection, something starts to emerge. A piece of who they are begins to take shape.

And sometimes, the real magic isn't just in the transformation of the individual. It's in the togetherness that forms.

Take Day One?Bread Day. One of my pairs decided to eyeball the amount of water for their focaccia dough. No measuring.

Just vibes. Why? I couldn't tell you. I give them fully written recipes. I do a full teacher demo right in front of them. But there we were, elbow-deep in a watery dough that was definitely not going to rise. We had to toss it and start again from scratch.

And you know what? They did. No tears.

No drama. Just a quick regroup, a little more listening the second time around, and another go?this time with a measuring cup. What struck me most, though, was the response from the rest of the class. No teasing. No ridicule.

Just quiet support and a shared sense of ?let's keep going.? There was something beautiful in that moment: the willingness to try, fail, reset, and try again. Together.

One of my students told me on the last day of camp that she'd been terrified walking in on the first day. She thought everyone would be mean. What she found instead was a warm, welcoming space where she was met with kindness.

That small shift?from fear to belonging?is the kind of transformation I never get tired of witnessing.

It's moments like that, not perfect cookies or flawless cakes, that stay with me.

This fall, we know we'll see more of that, too. After-school programs are starting back up. Our team is prepping for classes in art, music, sewing, pottery, performance, and yes, more baking.

We're also gearing up for one of our most anticipated events of the year: the 5th Annual Word of Mouth Monologue Competition.

Launching this month, the competition invites youth to choose and perform curated monologues that speak to real experiences and emotions. It's a celebration of voice, vulnerability, and the courage it takes to step into a story?and we can't wait to see what this

year's performers bring to the stage.

And underneath all of it is the same purpose: keep digging. Keep discovering.

We want every child to have the chance to find what's buried in them. And we want to be the kind of place where what's uncovered is seen and celebrated?not with fanfare, but with quiet affirmation. The kind that sticks. The kind that shapes how a child sees themselves long after the paint is dry or the oven is turned off.

And that's where you come in.

If you believe in that kind of work, there are a few ways to join us: Enroll a child or share our fall lineup with a family who might need it: streamshub.org/ourprograms

Support our mission by becoming One of 1000, our campaign to find 1,000 monthly donors at $10/month. You can help us reach our next milestone of 250 donors by signing up at: streamshub.org/oneof1000

Whether you show up with a whisk, a wallet, or a word of encouragement ? thank you.

You're part of the process. And the kids feel it. More than you know.

Written by Juli-Anne James, Executive