

# Ridgetop Runner

## Connecting the Farm School Community

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### Is Everything Okay?

Last week, I was concerned to encounter an eerie silence settling in the dust around the Chicken Coop School. Where was the usual laughter, music, constant motion? Had Theresa finally snapped and insisted on absolute stillness for the few remaining weeks of the school year? Could the kids really learn anything without shrieking and running around? I found their teacher humming quietly to herself in the kitchen of the farmhouse, and I had to ask: Was everything okay?

Turns out things have never been better. Like the apprentices at Maggie's Farm, the Chicken Coop students have designed their own independent research projects for the end of the year, and they are so engrossed in their work that they spend hours in studious silence at the library in North Orange and back home at the

coop. Lest you have any doubt that these are the sharpest young minds in America, take a look at the following list of research subjects. The titles read like doctoral dissertations, only these projects are actually interesting. The kids created them on their own, too. I guess the vegetables aren't the only impressive things growing up on the farm!

- Perry is following the interpretation of photography through the black and white landscapes of Ansel Adams.
- Lily is researching anorexia and bulimia.
- Grady is getting to know Barack Obama through his autobiography and speeches.
- Mike is learning more about Union General Joshua Chamberlain, the hero of Gettysburg and Appomattox Courthouse.
- Kelsey is exploring how the war in Iraq is changing the lives of Iraqi citizens.
- Kaethe is singing along to *Rent* and *Wicked* as she uncovers the origins of Broadway musicals.
- Like any good New Englander, Liz is brushing up on her Red Sox history.
- Maggie is researching Danish storyteller Hans Christian Andersen and his famous fairy tales.
- Equally Scandinavian, Tristan is studying the Kingdom of Sweden.
- Corinne is splashing through the water lilies to follow the life of Claude Monet.
- Isabel is comparing media coverage of common events, like the war in Iraq, by British and American newspapers.
- Fiona is training in the ways of Go, an ancient East Asian game of strategy.
- Annie is getting inside the equine mind with her research into horse psychology.
- Tom is enlisting, academically of course, in the First Crusade of the Middle Ages.



**Fermin**

by Isabel Bennett

Fermin grew up in Panama. Much of his life there was spent outside taking care of cows. His parents worked in a garden and that's where they got most of their food. After working in construction for 10 years he became interested in the farm. He and his partner, Lisa, were on the internet and that's how they discovered the Farm School and Maggie's Farm. Fermin is not sure what he will be doing after the program, but he is especially looking forward to the tractors, and he will enjoy the harvest.