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YOUR AWARD-WINNING, INDEPENDENT, NONPROFIT SOURCE OF NEWS AND VIEWS

Power restored in aftermath of late-winter storm

Weather service: 'good confidence that the snowmelt flood threat remains low'

By **Randolph T. Holhut**
The Commons

It was the biggest March snowstorms in Vermont in many years and, after leaving anywhere from a few inches in downtown Brattleboro to a few feet in the higher elevations of Windham County, it took days for life to return to normal. Elevation had a great deal to do with how much snow that

Windham County towns received in the nor'easter that hit the area from March 13-15, which left many people without power for days.

According to the National Weather Service (NWS) office in Albany, New York, 41.6 inches of snow was reported by a cooperative weather observer 6 miles west of West Brattleboro.

Wilmington and Marlboro both

■ SEE SNOWSTORM, A5

Supreme Court changes put state SCHOOL CHOICE in FLUX



Burr and Burton Academy, an almost 200-year-old private school in Manchester, is a public high school option for students in a number of towns in the region, including Dover, Londonderry, Wardsboro, and Stratton in Windham County.

JEFF POTTER/THE COMMONS

A new U.S. Supreme Court precedent allows public funding of religious schools. With state laws suddenly in conflict, lawmakers are also fighting those who want to keep things just as they are.



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT/COMMONS FILE PHOTO

"The United States laws are not aligned with the Vermont Constitution. They're misaligned," says Rep. Laura Sibilgia, I-Dover, who represents Dover, Wardsboro, and Stratton — towns that currently send some or all their students to public or private schools.

Putney takes steps to a brighter future

Our Future Putney community brainstorming focuses on revitalizing downtown, creating a community center, and developing housing solutions

By **Virginia Ray**
The Commons

PUTNEY—Three central areas of focus are taking shape as a result of community participation in Our Future Putney, a three-part process of facilitated discussions about the future of the town.

Visioning meetings were held in November, December, and January, facilitated by the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD), to engage community members, brainstorm ideas for the future, and identify top priorities for Putney.

Three areas for action emerged: revitalizing the downtown, developing a community center, and developing housing solutions. Task forces have been formed, and work is now underway in each area identified.

VCRD Community Engagement & Policy Director Jenna Koloski said Putney "had incredible participation" in the process, with more than 300 community members involved.

"We've seen huge numbers of local volunteers sign up," she said. "We've done 87 processes in the past 20 years, and this is one of the largest number of sign-ups at the end of the process."

"That moment, when volunteers sign up, that's when the community is saying, 'not only do we want to see this, we want to work on it.' That says a lot about the community's level of engagement in Putney."

All three task forces have 50 to

90 folks signed up to help in each of the three areas identified to pursue. Members of the respective task forces are starting to take first steps, Koloski said.

"We are here as a support, but the leadership really goes to local leaders who volunteered to share these groups and those who have signed up to serve. We offer support, but this is the moment where it's kind of a handover to the community to take the steps."

Areas of focus

The task force to revitalize the downtown is being co-chaired by Lyssa Papazian and Eric Bass.

■ SEE PUTNEY FUTURE, A6

By **Joyce Marcel**
The Commons

Does the United States still believe in the separation between church and state?

This is one of the big questions making big waves in Vermont right now. In 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court's *Carson v. Makin* decision required states with voucher systems to offer them to religious schools as well as to secular ones.

Vermont education often depends on vouchers because this

small state has a limited number of schools. Some towns do not have a high school. Some of those towns also lack an elementary school. In these towns, taxpayer dollars, in the form of vouchers, can go to a private school of the parents' choice.

Exempted from vouchers are the state's religious schools, which by state law have not been able to receive public tax dollars. Now, thanks to *Carson v. Makin*, Vermont law, which still upholds the separation of church and state, is out of sync with U.S. law.

"The Supreme Court decision marks the first time that the court has explicitly required taxpayers to support a specific religious activity," said Rep. Laura Sibilgia, I-Dover. "Now effectively, if parents are offered school choice tuition dollars for their student, they cannot be banned from choosing religious education."

Sibilgia represents towns such as Dover, Stamford, Readsboro, and Wardsboro, which only operate elementary schools, and towns like Searsburg and Stratton, which do not operate

any schools. The court ruling has left parents of schoolchildren in these towns sometimes frantic.

"Those students have a limited choice," Sibilgia said. "The Supreme Court is saying that if you are offering parents a choice and then tell them they may not choose a choice that aligns with their religion, you are infringing on their religious freedom."

"So that presents a conundrum in Vermont, where Vermonters cannot be compelled to pay for religious

■ SEE SCHOOL CHOICE, A2

At Windham Northeast, a fresh approach to school meals

Food service director Harley Sterling has a simple philosophy — buy local, make it fresh, and feed everybody

By **Robert F. Smith**
The Commons

BELLOWS FALLS—Harley Sterling, school nutrition director for the Windham Northeast Supervisory Union (WNESU), is not so much a man with a mission

as he is a man with a vision — a broad vision.

And WNESU's schools are his canvas for expressing that vision.

Sterling is making sure that all of the students in his district are fed year-round. He sees it that the food they get is nutritious, very well prepared, and



ROBERT F. SMITH/THE COMMONS

Harley Sterling, school nutrition director for the Windham Northeast Supervisory Union, and Wendy Herbert do salad prep in the kitchen of the BFUHS cafeteria.

and benefits possible.

The success with which he is pursuing this vision was rewarded in 2022, when Sterling received the Innovation and Advocacy

award from the School Nutrition Association of Vermont and Hunger Free Vermont.

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■ SEE STERLING, A6

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We especially invite responses to material that appears in the paper.

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In memoriam:
Alan O. Dann, Judy Gorman, Mia Gannon

School choice FROM SECTION FRONT

worship," she said. "So the United States laws are not aligned with the Vermont Constitution. They're misaligned."

Rights in conflict

This year, the Legislature is hard at work on the issue. Falko Schilling, the ACLU's advocacy director, testified to the House Committee on Education on the implications of *Carson v. Makin*. "The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution includes the Establishment Clause, which prohibits the government from 'establishing' a religion," Schilling testified. "This is the origin of the 'separation of church and state,' and has historically been understood to prohibit government entanglement with religion. "Though the Establishment Clause's contours have changed over time, traditionally the U.S. Supreme Court had understood it to require states to be cautious about commingling government functions with religion."

However, Schilling explained, "The First Amendment also includes the Free Exercise Clause, which protects an individual's right to practice their religion free from governmental intrusion." That clause prohibits the government "from 'discriminating' against religious persons or a particular religion," he continued. "The arc of the past few years is that the new Supreme Court majority has generally viewed preferences for secular government or services as a form of 'discrimination' against religion."

Vermont has its own related constitutional provision, known as the "Compelled Support Clause."

Chapter 1, Article 3 of the Vermont Constitution states, in part, "that no person ought to, or of right can be compelled to attend any religious worship, or erect or support any place of worship, or maintain any minister, contrary to the dictates of conscience."

"This is an individual right that includes elements of Free Exercise and Establishment Clause concerns, but — at the risk of oversimplifying — has been understood to essentially mean that Vermont cannot force a taxpayer or citizen to subsidize religious programming or institutions against their will," Schilling wrote.

In the past, the U.S. Supreme Court has already weakened the Establishment Clause to allow states to fund some religious programming.

But things have changed since the appointment of right-wing justices Neil Gorsuch in 2017, Brett Kavanaugh in 2018, and Amy Coney Barrett in 2020.

"The newly constituted Court has aggressively expanded the Free Exercise Clause in this context to require states to fund religious schools if they fund other secular private schools," Schilling said. "The Court's ruling in *Carson v. Makin* is the latest domino in this chain."

This puts Vermont in a tenuous position.

"Vermont, accordingly, has a longstanding commitment to guaranteeing access to high-quality public education and ensuring that our public education system is well-funded, equitable, and rooted in democratic values," Schilling wrote.

"Given the abundance of small towns and rural areas in Vermont, our education system relies in part on non-public schools to educate students living in areas not served by public institutions, or 'school choice towns.' For years, our state has paid public tuition to those private schools, while trying to maintain safeguards, including those designed to prevent public dollars from funding religious instruction."

Carson marks a substantial shift in constitutional law. Therefore, it makes a shift "in how we think about our traditions — specifically, how we balance the First Amendment rights to freely express one's religion with protecting against government establishment of religion," Schilling wrote.

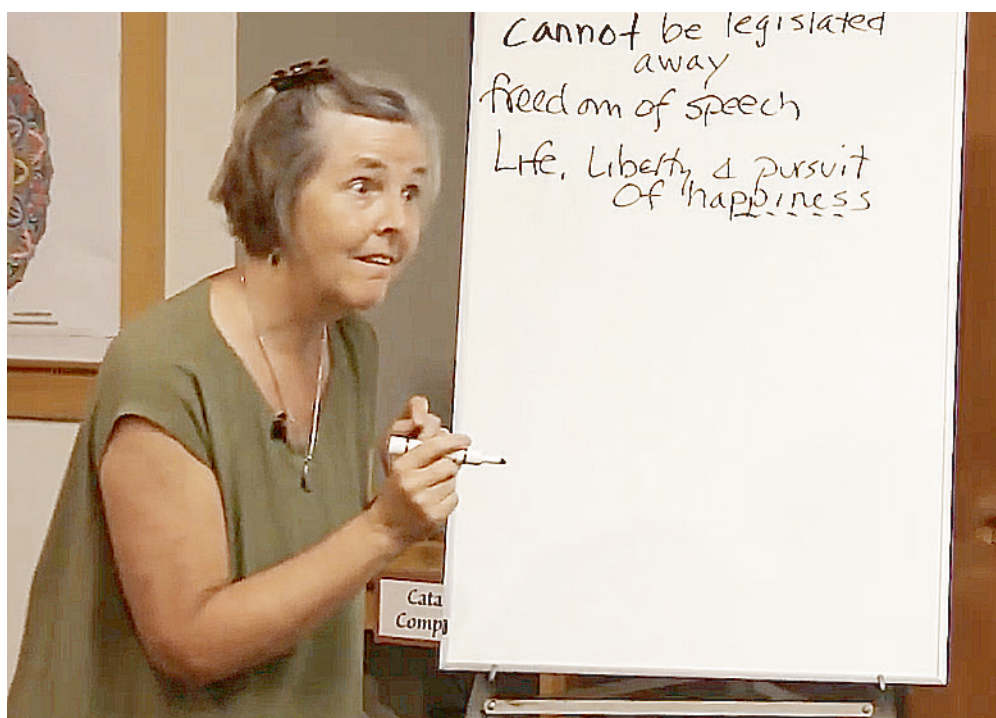
"As a result of this decision, the Supreme Court has put Vermont in a very difficult position as it seeks to comply with the Court's ruling while still upholding Vermont's own constitutional protections, democratic values, and traditions."

A matter of discrimination

For Rep. Sibilia, the issue comes down to discrimination. She strongly believes the state should not give money to schools that might discriminate against its students on religious grounds, especially if they are gay or transgender.

"The court did not address the question of whether a religious institution can cite sincerely held religious beliefs to violate laws against discrimination," Sibilia said.

Last year, the state implemented anti-discrimination rules



Marlboro College Professor Emerita Meg Mott: "The whole First Amendment, all that beautiful language about free press, free speech, right to assembly, free exercise of religion — underneath all of that is the basic understanding that you get to follow your conscience."

for private schools wanting to apply for state money. The heads of those schools must sign statements affirming that their schools will not discriminate.

Now, according to astory in *ViDigger*, two Christian schools are pushing back against the rules.

"As a Christian-based school we have a statutory and constitutional right to make decisions based on our religious beliefs, including those pertaining to marriage and sexuality," three leaders of United Christian Academy in Newport wrote in a statement that they filed with the Vermont Agency of Education.

Mid Vermont Christian School, a private religious school in Quechee, submitted essentially the same statement. And last month, its girls' basketball team forfeited a playoff game rather than compete against a team with a transgender player.

These schools "have a history of discriminatory practices against LGBTQ human beings," Sibilia told *The Commons*.

"I strongly support parents having the choice to enroll their students in religious K-12 schools and paying out of pocket to do so," Sibilia wrote on her blog (laurasibiliavt.com). "I've not taken a public position on public funding being used to provide tuition to religious schools."

Sibilia wrote that she has "deep concerns about violating the separation of church and state, even with the technicality that the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled

on, and about, discrimination towards other religions, women and LGBTQ people that is inherent in some religions. I'm troubled by the recent policy spaces created by the court rulings."

Freedom, liberty, and the First Amendment

To the surprise of many, the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution appears ambivalent on the subject of separation between church and state. It states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

For help understanding the issue, *The Commons* went to Constitutional scholar Dr. Meg Mott.

"For people who are feeling concerned about liberties, the *Carson vs. Makin* decision may feel like an abridgment of the 'establishment clause' in the First Amendment," Mott agreed.

She contrasted that with the Vermont Constitution, which was written in 1777; the U.S. one was written in 1787.

"The people who are writing the Bill of Rights, James Madison and others, are looking at all these state constitutions," Mott said. "So when they wrote that Congress shall make no law with respect to the establishment

of religion, or the free exercise thereof, those two clauses to a modern ear may seem like two different things."

First, "We've got to keep our country from being Christian, or any other kind of established religion." Right? Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion," Mott continued. "And the other one is saying, but 'We have to respect individual rights to religion, to worship, however you want.'"

So if a person argues that taxpayers cannot be compelled to fund parochial schools, they have to argue that a taxpayer cannot be compelled "to support a minister or the making of a minister," Mott said.

Essentially, according to Mott, "making a minister" implies a graduate-level education, and that is not what is at play here.

Also, "support" becomes the operative word. If a person does not believe in God at all, for example, can they be forced to support a place of worship with their taxpayer dollars?

"Personally, I get concerned when the state starts saying we will only send our money to this kind of private school, but we won't fund that kind of private school," Mott said. "And most of these private schools around here have religious backgrounds anyway, if you go back far enough. It was some Quaker group or Presbyterian group or Methodist group."

This "new" way of loosening the separation between church and state has been a long time coming, Mott said.

"There was a Lutheran School in Missouri that applied for funds to get this rubberized treatment for their playground," Mott said. "And the state of Missouri said 'No, sorry, you can't. You're a religious school and we don't [give] funding for religious schools.' But they said, 'Well, it's not for religious education. This is for a playground.'"

"And the Supreme Court turned that over years ago and said, 'You can't discriminate that way. You can't say we want this playground equipment or material available for all different schools except this school.' And that started to make this turn, that if they're going to provide a service to individuals, they have to do it across the board."

The *Carson v. Makin* case was brought by parents against the State of Maine, not by the state or a public institution. This is an important distinction, Mott said.

"It has to do with individual rights," Mott said. "The court said the state should not interfere with individual rights. The plaintiffs bringing these cases are parents who say, 'Why is it that the state of Maine is able to fund all sorts of private schools, but my school, the school I want to send my kids to, is not on the list?'"

"So what the Supreme Court did is look at the Maine Department of Education, how it decides who gets funded and who doesn't," Mott continued. "And they saw that some private schools that had a religious history were given funds. People could send their kids to those. And to schools that were more explicitly religious, they couldn't."

And so, "because that was discrimination on the parents, the Court said, 'You can't do that. You have to allow parents the choice to send their kid where they want to go,'" she said.

The Vermont Constitution backs this up when it talks about freedom of conscience, Mott said.

"So if a parent says, 'I really feel this is what my kids need, and it's aligned with my beliefs, it's aligned with my standards, and they have high academic standards because they pass the accreditation,' then the state has to allow the parent to send the child to that school," Mott said. "The parents' freedom of conscience, that has got to be protected."

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The equal protection argument

Going further, how does the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution play out?

“It says that you can’t treat two sets of parents differently,” Mott said, using in her examples two area schools, one a Catholic school in Brattleboro and the other a non-sectarian private school in Putney.

“One set of parents says, ‘I want to send my kids to St. Michael’s and another set of parents says, ‘I want to send my kid to The Putney School,’” she said. “And both parents say, ‘We’ve looked into the schools and we feel like these are the best match for our kids.’ And Vermont says yes to Putney School and no to St. Michael’s School, because Vermont at the moment has a non-sectarian requirement?”

To make this even more complicated, the Vermont-NEA, which represents 13,000 public school teachers in the state, is in favor of eliminating vouchers entirely — not as a matter of religion. They feel that all the state’s money should go to supporting public education.

“They argue — and it’s a legitimate argument — that if Vermont is putting all this money into private schools, it’s giving parents a lot of incentive, particularly middle class and upper class parents, to pull their kids out of the public schools,” Mott said. “That means the public schools are dealing with high-needs students, and that’s not great.”

She called that argument “a very strong case to just get rid of the voucher program.”

Virtue, vice, and religious pluralism

The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and Article 3 of the Vermont Constitution aside, Mott said, there is another twist to the tale.

“Nobody seems to be talking about this, but it’s Chapter II, Article 68 in the Vermont Constitution,” she said.

That article: “Laws for the encouragement of virtue and prevention of vice and immorality ought to be constantly kept in force, and duly maintained in each town unless the general assembly permits other provisions for the convenient instruction of youth.

“All religious societies or bodies of people that may be united or incorporated for the advancement of religion and learning or for other pious and charitable purposes shall be encouraged and protected in the enjoyment of the privileges, immunities and estates, which they in justice ought to enjoy under such regulations as the general assembly of the state shall direct.”

That means that according to the state constitution, religious societies have a role in educating Vermont youth because, Mott said, “they are understood to encourage virtue and prevent vice. So I think there’s a strong case to be made that money should go to St. Michael’s if it goes to The Putney School.”

Religious pluralism is an option here.

“What does that mean?” Mott said. “It means that you give parents a choice.”

Specifically, she said, “You say, ‘Let’s make the public schools as great as they are so parents want to come. Let’s allow parents, if they want to go to private schools,

to go to private schools. Let’s let people, if they want to home school, to home school. Let’s give people real choice.”

“One of the most exciting things about the Constitution is that it allowed for religious pluralism,” Mott said. “It didn’t force anybody to take up a religion. You could be an atheist. Let the people decide on their own, based on their own conscience.”

The Legislature gets involved

Getting rid of the voucher program is exactly what the Vermont Legislature is considering in both chambers.

The Senate’s bill essentially eliminates school vouchers except for schools that serve students with disabilities and for four historical institutions: St. Johnsbury Academy, Burr & Burton Academy in Manchester, Lyndon Institute, and Thetford Academy.

The ACLU’s Schilling agrees with this method of aligning the state’s schools with the Supreme Court decision.

“The most straightforward way that Vermont can balance its values and constitutional mandates is to limit the use of public funds to go only to public schools,” Schilling wrote.

As an alternative, the state can set standards that have to be met by parochial as well as private schools.

“Another constitutionally viable option is to require school districts that do not maintain public schools to designate a select number of public and independent schools that are eligible to receive public funds from their district,” Schilling said.

The Senate bill in its current form takes this approach, calling for such towns to designate up to three schools as the public schools of the district.

“Under such a program the Legislature could establish non-discriminatory and universally applicable standards to help districts select what schools would best meet the needs of their communities,” Schilling said.

“Regardless of which approach Vermont takes to school funding, it should strengthen anti-discrimination protections for students and make those protections apply to all schools, across-the-board, without exception.”

Mott has a different and perhaps more controversial view: that children should not be protected against discriminatory actions but should learn from them.

“The Supreme Court is going to say that individual parents have a right to make choices for their children based on their conscience,” Mott said. “The whole First Amendment, all that beautiful language about free press, free speech, right to assembly, free exercise of religion — underneath all of that is the basic understanding that you get to follow your conscience.”

The Legislature is still wrestling with this issue and, Schilling told *The Commons*, it “does have the power to make changes to the program this year if they wanted to, but I see that as highly unlikely.”

Under the Senate bill, towns that would be required to designate schools to send their students to “would not have to change current practices until 2028, but could do so sooner,” he said.

“There are, of course, other proposals under discussion that could

take different approaches.”

To hear her constituents’ beliefs, Rep. Sibilia held town forums in Stratton, Wardsboro, Jamaica, and Dover. She said she learned quite a few things.

The first lesson came as no surprise, she said: It confirmed that parents feel very strongly about their children’s education and the opportunity it can provide them.

Further, she learned that discrimination was an important topic to many parents. Some are concerned about discrimination in local public schools — concerns that are going unaddressed, she said.

Sibilia said she learned that “we don’t all have a commonly shared language about what kind of discrimination is illegal. And while most meeting attendees that spoke noted they are opposed to discrimination, a few were OK with a few schools discriminating.”

Some people said that “districts that did not have school choice were more alarmed that Vermont is paying taxpayer dollars to religious schools than districts that do have school choice,” Sibilia said.

She also asserted that “Burr & Burton is telling parents that they will not comply with the designation, that discrimination is not OK, and that legislators are trying to destroy the local school system,” Sibilia said.

A February letter from Mark Tashjian, headmaster of the self-described “independent high school with a public mission,” Taconic & Green Regional School District to support articles on their respective warrants affirming the status quo and specifically rejecting “legislation that would change the current structure.”

Burr & Burton’s March alumni newsletter implored readers to vote for the school budget and “if you no longer live in the area, please reach out to Vermont family and friends and urge them to attend and support Vermont’s current education system.”

Winhall voters approved the article by unanimous voice vote, and Taconic & Green district towns approved the article 1,701-174.


In general, Sibilia said, “Parents and residents feel like they need more information about the court cases and what constitutes discrimination. I am working to set up additional forums with legal experts to help us develop shared understanding of these things.”

“The independent school lobby is working very hard to maintain the status quo and is not acknowledging that this perpetual strategy has led to us paying public dollars for religious worship today.”

A Feb. 24 memo to state lawmakers on the Senate and House education committees from the Bennington-Rutland Supervisory Union, the Taconic and Green Regional School District, the Mettawee School District, and Winhall School District acknowledged that the bills under consideration represent the Legislature’s response to *Carson v. Makin*, but they also represent “an attack on ‘school choice’ as it exists now.”

“We believe that the intent of this change is to allow the legislature to exclude religious schools from the list of approved schools and thus continue to prevent them from receiving tuition payments,” the letter continued. “Unfortunately, what this change actually does is exclude virtually all Vermont independent schools.”

Ultimately, Sibilia said she believes that the House and Senate bills will be able to maintain “historic community choice while modernizing Vermont’s public education system to align with both Vermont and U.S. Constitutional requirements.”



POTLUCK
 March 20th • 5:30pm to 7:00pm
 At the Marina Restaurant
 Public invited with or without food.
 Meet people. Learn about Time Trade.
 See more about it at:
www.brattleborotimetrade.org

PUBLIC NOTICES

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Public Hearing Notice

Notice is hereby given that the Brattleboro Development Review Board will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, 4.5.2023 at 7:00 PM in the Selectboard Meeting Room, Municipal Center, 230 Main St., Brattleboro, VT; the meeting will also be held on Zoom.

Meeting ID: 881 4045 1917 Passcode: 190450.

2023-7 JMD Hospitality, LLC; SC District; request for Subdivision, Waiver of Dimensional Standards and Local Act 250 approval to create a new lot containing the barn residences at 1382 Putney Rd; TMP 80003.000; 2023-11 Sheena Rashed; RN District; request for Home Business Approval to operate a single-chair salon in a renovated existing outbuilding at 525 Guilford St; TMP 110228.130; 2023-13 Kurt Daims; RN District; appeal of a zoning violation, establishing 3 RVs as living space without a permit at 16 Washington St; TMP 325378.000. Pursuant to 24 VSA §§ 4464(a)(1)(C) and 4471(a), participation in this local proceeding is a prerequisite to the right to take any subsequent appeal.

NOTE: Meetings are open to the public. For specific accommodations please call the Planning Services Department at 802-251-8154. Application materials are available at <https://tinyurl.com/DRB-Applications> Additional materials may be submitted up to the time of the meeting and will be uploaded to the above address.

STATE OF VERMONT

SUPERIOR COURT **PROBATE DIVISION**
 Windham Unit **Docket No.: 23-PR-00365**

In re ESTATE of: **Clyde McNeill**

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

To the Creditors of: Clyde McNeill (Decedent)
 late of Brattleboro, Vermont (Decedent’s town of residence)

I have been appointed to administer this estate. All creditors having claims against the decedent or the estate must present their claims in writing within four (4) months of the first publication of this notice. **The claim must be presented to me at the address listed below with a copy sent to the Court. The claim may be barred forever if it is not presented within the four (4) month period.**

Dated: March 20, 2023 147 Western Avenue
 Molly Ladner, Attorney Brattleboro, VT 05301

Name of Publication: The Commons 802-257-7244
 Publication Date: March 22, 2023 mladner@pdsclaw.com

Name of Probate Court: Vermont County Superior Court, Windham Unit
 Address of Probate Court: 30 Putney Road, 2nd Floor, Brattleboro, VT 05301

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The Grammar School in Putney, VT seeks an EXPERIENCED CAMP DIRECTOR for the summer!

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 PT beginning immediately;
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For complete job description: www.thegrammarschool.org

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Coalition Director Job Description

Hours and Compensation: This is a flexible 40-hour per week position eligible for generous benefits including paid time-off, health and dental insurance, and 403(b) retirement benefits. Starting rate, \$25 per hour.

Job Summary: The Coalition Director supports the efforts of community members and organizations working together to reduce substance use. The Director will provide leadership, continuity, and coordination for the continued capacity building and oversight of the West River Valley Thrives Coalition and its activities, resources, and staff. This will include coalition and board development, management of grants, as well as planning for the sustainability of the coalition and its work. Coalition operation will be guided by the Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) process, which includes assessment, capacity building, planning, implementation, and evaluation. The position will also include some direct programming responsibilities.

For full job announcement and how to apply go to:
wrthrives.org/careers-and-internships
 Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis.
 Position will remain open until filled.

Town of Townshend Highway Road Crew Job Opening

Current CDL required. Heavy Equipment experience preferred. Competitive salary and benefits. E.O.E.

Applications can be picked up at Town Hall located at 2006 Rte. 30 in Townshend
 Or call the Town Clerk’s office at 802-365-7300.

Applications are due by Friday, March 31st.
 Drop off application or mail it to: Road Crew
 Town of Townshend
 PO Box 223, Townshend, VT 05353

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4-H Educator - Windham and Windsor Counties

University of Vermont Extension is hiring a .83FTE to 1.0FTE 4-H Educator located for Windham and Windsor Counties. 4-H is the nation’s positive youth development program that builds skills needed in life and career, through fun, hands-on experiences, delivered in partnership with caring adults. 4-H Educators provide program development, coordination, outreach and teaching for county, regional and state UVM Extension 4-H Youth Development Programs for youth ages 5-18. This will include developing and collaborating with volunteers and community partners, promoting and expanding 4-H efforts, and stimulating excellence in carrying out the overall 4-H positive youth development mission. Programming foci include science, healthy living, and civic engagement as well as building leadership and other workforce skills. Emphasis is placed on reaching diverse and under-represented audiences.

Bachelor’s degree and two years’ related experience, or equivalent combination, with focus in youth or family programming, is required. Experience with volunteer development and/or building community collaborations preferred. Ability to plan, organize, coordinate, teach and evaluate educational programs. Strong interpersonal skills are needed, including the ability to work with a diverse group of youth and adult volunteers and community partners, in both an independent and team environment. Computer and electronic communication proficiency is needed. Willingness to work a flexible schedule, which will include periodic evenings and weekends, and have an ability to travel, primarily within the state. Direct experience serving diverse and under-represented populations desired. Must possess a commitment to fostering and supporting a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment for all.

To learn more or to apply, visit uvmjobs.com Posting #S4188PO, complete an application along with a resume, cover letter, and two writing samples, one of which must include images or data visualization. Cover letters should provide information about how you would contribute to the diversity of UVM and the 4-H program. Position is open until filled.

The University of Vermont is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, protected veteran status, or any category legally protected by federal or state law.

The Commons

A hearty thank you to our intrepid volunteers – Lucinda, Spoon, Karen, Karena, Jon, and Alison – who bring The Commons to eager downtown readers every week, including pitching in through the challenges of last week’s big storm. We also greatly appreciate our dedicated drivers! Thank you all!

MILESTONES

Births, deaths, and news of people from Windham County

College news

• The following local students were honored for academic achievement in the fall 2022 semester at Champlain College in Burlington: **Ashley Bolton** of South Londonderry and **Zachary Condon** of Whitingham were named to the President's List, and **Hailee Mattson** of Dummerston, **Mark Hunnell** of South Londonderry, **Janelle Fisher** of Whitingham, and **John Clark** of Brattleboro were named to the Dean's List.

• **Liina Koch** of South Londonderry was named to the Dean's List for the fall 2022 semester at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine.

• **Owen Rounds** of Westminster was named to the President's Honors List for the fall 2022 semester at the University of Hartford in West Hartford, Connecticut.

Obituaries



• **Wells C. Cunningham Sr., 98**, formerly of Brattleboro. Died Jan. 25, 2023 at Vernon Green Nursing Home. A self-proclaimed "Jersey Boy," he was a true Vermonter at heart. Wells moved to Brattleboro soon after his wife, Jean Marie Gallup, died in 1977. Wells was born in Summit, New Jersey on May 12, 1924, the son of Leon and Josephine (Wells) Cunningham. Wells was raised and educated in Mendham, New Jersey and graduated from Morristown (N.J.) High School with the Class of 1941. A veteran of World War II, he enlisted in October 1942 and served in the Pacific Theater of Operations, first in the Army Air Forces and later as an infantryman, until his honorable discharge from active service in February 1946. Wells attended Marlboro College on the GI Bill with its first class and graduated with a diploma in social and political sciences. He and Jean Marie met at the train station in Brattleboro in 1946, when she accompanied a young man from Marlboro College to pick up a new student, Wells. Soon after, Jean Marie, accepting an invitation from Wells to a dance on Potash Hill, walked six miles in snowfall from her home on Ames Hill. Wells and Jean Marie were married at First Congregational Church in West Brattleboro before moving to Connecticut to raise a family. They both acquired master's degrees and moved on in life with dual incomes that allowed them to reach their dream of owning a historic home in Newington, Connecticut. Wells initially worked for the American Heart Association in New Britain before his employment with the Connecticut Department of Education. He worked 30 years in the Hartford office as a vocational counselor for veterans. With her degree from Boston College, Jean Marie was initially a physical therapist and later became a special education teacher. Wells was a non-competitive athlete and remained strong and fit throughout his life. He could often be seen in his neighborhood rollerblading and "skinny skiing." He excelled at ice skating and tennis, and won many trophies in skeet shooting.

Wells was an avid bocci player. He was an advocate for the placement of the bocci court across the street at Memorial Park, and acted as a teacher to any passers-by interested in learning the sport. At the Brattleboro Tennis Club, he encouraged his grandson in his matches and kept up his own skills at the backboards when he was in his late 80s. Wells often reminisced about his days as a young boy growing up in New Jersey in an adult-centered home with his parents, grandparents, and a loving sister 10 years his senior. He played jokes to the entertainment of everyone and supported his family during the Great Depression by doing odd jobs around town. "Wellsy" earned a reputation with locals as an innovator and was sought after for odd jobs. He led the pack in commercial berry picking by cleverly grasping the basket between his thighs and using two hands to move more quickly than others down the rows. He once got himself in a pickle when he told the lady next door that he could sand floors. She left him to it with a sander twice his size. Unwilling to tell her his ruse, he developed a special floor-sander technique that impressed his benefactor so much he received double pay. In a safe, quiet time when Ford cars were first seen on the streets, Wells left the house in the morning, always finding adventures to tell his folks about at home over dinner (which he, most often, provided). In his young adult life, Wells worked many occupations while attending Marlboro College. One reminiscence was his story of his "ditch-digging" days, when he and a couple of other young bucks were fixing the roads around the Marlboro College. He also drove a laundry truck in Brattleboro and helped the old ladies who provided boarding for him at their Wilmington home, probably in exchange for their wonderful cooking, of which he often spoke. There was never a complaint from Wells regarding labor. For him, it was more about insight into lessons learned from each job...and the jokes to be had. Wells devotedly attended the Guilford Fair, first with his wife's family, who were auctioneers and callers for the horse- and ox-pulling competitions. He never missed a local sugar-on-snow supper and enjoyed socializing, especially at the meals at the Brattleboro Senior Center. Wells loved to eat, but never gained extra weight. Wells had no complaints about his enlistment in the Army Air Forces and was not at all homesick as his mother had hoped. Wells had high regard for his wrist watch, as its origin was his favorite story to tell. While he was stationed in Guam, a fellow enlistee had the innovative idea to make steel wristbands from a downed Japanese plane. Wells forever admired the man and the watch never came off his wrist until a few days before he died. Wells' many stories about his experiences in war were good memories of adventurous times, and not at all about waiting with his buddies for the invasion of Japan that never happened. He will be greatly missed by all, and his memory will continue on for generations to come. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: In keeping with his final wishes, no formal services are scheduled. Wells will be laid to rest in the family lot in Christ Church Cemetery in the Algiers

section of Guilford. Friends are welcome to plant a flower for his remembrance in their garden or at his stone under the lilac bush.



• **Charles Edward "Chuck" Evans, 78**, of Guilford. Died peacefully on Feb. 27, 2023 in Bennington at the Washington Elms Home for Assisted Living. Charles was born at Grace Cottage in Townshend on Jan. 2, 1945 to Margery and Emery Evans, the youngest of three children, and spent his early life at the Evans Family Farm in Guilford. He was an avid hockey and football player and played in the Shrine Maple Sugar Bowl for the Vermont team. After graduating at the top of his class from Brattleboro Union High School, he attended the University of Vermont. Upon graduation from UVM, he enlisted in the Army on Oct. 23, 1967. While in the army, he learned the Russian language and served in Army Intelligence and Security in West Berlin in Germany. After his honorable discharge, he struggled with the experiences he had while serving in Berlin and shared many stories of his time there. Living a simple and kind life, Charles will always be fondly remembered for his garden, his art, and his work in translating stories from Russian to English. Charles was predeceased by his parents and his sister Marcia Evans Kempf. He is survived by his brother Chester Evans and his children: Tami Evans-Napolitano (husband Anthony Napolitano), Ronald Evans, Chad Evans (son Kyle Evans), Jason Evans (daughter Malana Evans), and Nicole Evans (daughter Aliza Mahoney), as well as Marcia Evans Kempf's son Daniel L. Brush (wife Maureen Hall), and grandchildren Aurora Brush, Emery Brush, and Alex Brush. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: Services will be held on May 23, at 11 a.m., at the Christ Church Cemetery in Algiers to be followed by an afternoon potluck at the Clark farm in Guilford.

• **Nellie Maria (Wessel) Hamilton, 75**, of Hinsdale, New Hampshire. Died March 1, 2023. Born Neeltje Maria Wessel in Vlaardingen, Holland, she emigrated to the United States with her parents in 1954. She grew up in Brattleboro, where she attended Brattleboro Union High School. Nellie enjoyed all things involving yarn and thread. She loved cross-stitch and needlepoint, knitting and crocheting, as well as making clothes for herself, family, and friends. She had a great love of local history and was an avid scrapbooker of local events. She is survived by her husband of 57 years, Wayne Hamilton; her four children, Willem (Deb) Hamilton, Jeana (Tom) Woodbury, Johannes Hamilton, and Harral Hamilton; her granddaughter Mariah (Lyndel) Farmer-Major; and her two great-grandchildren, Malachi and Serenity. She also leaves behind her brother Bill (Sharon) Wessel, sisters Trixie (Eric) Stinebring, Joy (Ian) Trigg, Rose (Wendy) Wessel, and many nieces and nephews. Nellie was preceded in death by her parents Johannes and Sophia (van Hooven) Wessel. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A private memorial is planned for the spring.



• **Marguerite L. (LeComte) Madonna, 91**, formerly of Fall River, Massachusetts. Died February 26, 2023. Born in Fall River, she was the daughter of the late George and Rose (Bougie) LeComte, and wife of the late Andrew C. Madonna of 59 years. Marguerite worked at Shelbourne Shirt for 41 years, retiring

as a floor supervisor. She spent the last eight years experiencing life in Vermont with her daughter Diane and her husband Eugene. Marguerite was always open for a road trip and was a true foodie at heart who also enjoyed playing bingo. She is survived by her children: Catherine A. Augustine (husband Robert), Jo-Ann M. Preble (husband Kenneth), Diane Wrinn (husband Eugene), and Eric D. Madonna (wife Janice); daughter-in-law Carissa Madonna; seven grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren, one great-great-grandchild, and many nieces and nephews. She was also the mother of the late David B. Madonna and sister of the late Arthur and Leo LeComte, Lydia St. Yves, Sister Mary Theresa Madonna, Irene Casey, Germane Fortier, Elizabeth Bougie, and Georgette Quintin. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A funeral Mass was held March 1 at St. Mary's Cathedral in Fall River, with burial in St. Patrick's Cemetery. To express condolences to the family, visit hathawayfunerals.com.



• **Robert Arthur "Bob" Pease, 85**, of Wilmington. Died at his home on March 8, 2023 after waging a strong fight

with cancer for eight years. Robert was born in Brattleboro, the son of Arthur and Eleanor (Robbins) Pease. He graduated from Brattleboro Union High School with the Class of 1958 and enlisted in the Army, stationed in Fort Sill, Oklahoma. At the age of 18, Robert worked at the Retreat Dairy Farm, and then transitioned to the Retreat Carpentry Shop, retiring after 45 years. Robert was a true meat and potatoes guy. He enjoyed the outdoors hunting deer, bear, rabbit, and turkey. It was normal for him to "bag a good deer every year." He would hunt the ridge lines in Wardsboro, and also spent some time hunting in northern Vermont, where he got his largest deer of 220 pounds, with a nice rack of 11 points. Ice fishing was also a favored pastime, back when the perch was plentiful by the buckets. He was a past member of the Deerfield Valley Stump Jumpers Snowmobile Club and was a loyal Red Sox fan. Robert always enjoyed the calming peace he got with Red Man tobacco and Budweiser beer, giving them his fair share of business. Sundays were always the day for a large bowl of popcorn that was enjoyed by the family after church. He also was a master of making Westerns, popcorn, and pan fried perch. At the age of 18, he purchased property in West Wardsboro and built his own hunting camp with his father. It has had many years of use and memories. Target practice at camp was one of the many memories he shares with his children and grandchildren. Robert was a quiet man, but his words were always full of wit and wisdom. Robert is survived by his wife Shirley (Adams) Pease, whom he married in Wilmington on April 2, 1967, their two daughters, Heather Pease-Dix (her husband Jeremy Dix) and Amanda Pease (companion Sean Barber); grandchildren Quinlan, Lillian, and Elizabeth Barber; his brother Warren Pease and sister Sara Morse. He was predeceased by his parents and a sister, Mary Brilliant. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: The family would love you to share memories and photos. Please send an index card or bring to the services, which will be held later in the summer. Donations to the Deerfield Valley Rescue Squad, in care of Covey Allen & Shea Funeral Home, P.O. Box 215, Wilmington, VT 05363. To send condolences, visit sheafuneralhomes.com.

• **Sharyn Effie "Nenie" Sargent, 74**, of Brattleboro. Died March 3 2023, surrounded by her loving family and friends, following a short, courageous battle with cancer. She was born on Nov. 21, 1948 and lived in Putney with her parents, Earl and Marie Cook, and her five siblings, Charlie, Skip, Harold, Mary, and John. Although they didn't have much growing up, Sharyn found the beauty of making the most out of life with her siblings. Her love of life and willingness to make something out of nothing carried over into adulthood. Sharyn carried many jobs during her life, but the one she was most fond of was working at the "snack shack" at Living Memorial Park. Although she enjoyed working at the pool and ice skating rink, her true love was the men's softball games. She treasured all the relationships she gained in those years. Her greatest accomplishment in life was her family. She gave birth to four wonderful daughters and raised them in Brattleboro. Later in life, she was blessed with 10 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Sharyn was a mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, aunt, sister, friend, and co-worker to any and all who needed someone. Everyone knew her as Nenie. If you didn't have a place to go, you had a place at her table, no questions asked. She loved unconditionally, never missing a chance to just pick up the phone to say hello. She was the type of woman who would give anything to anyone in need and never take in return. She played softball in her 20s. She coached t-ball and youth baseball. She enjoyed strawberry picking and making jam. She was an avid reader, and a jack of all trades. From wallpapering, sewing, quilting, and flooring, there was nothing she could not do. Sharyn will be remembered as the hardworking, compassionate, coffee-obsessed, flower-loving, middle finger-toting, loving woman we all knew and loved. She continues to live and exist through her daughters Jeanna Langlois-Sargent and her wife Sherrie of Iowa, Crystal Grandmont and her husband Ryan of New Hampshire, Heather Chase and Shaheim Bradshaw of Massachusetts, and Amanda Sargent of Brattleboro. She also leaves her grandchildren Christopher Gurney and his wife Suzie, Mackenzie, Noah, Jake, Rene, Adison, DJ, Austin, Chelly, and Domenic, and her great-grandchildren

Senior Solutions seeks volunteers for Home Visitor programs

SPRINGFIELD—Senior Solutions seeks volunteers for their Home Visitor programs, which help older adults age in place with dignity and independence and fit the needs of the older individuals in our community.

Some of the programs offered by Senior Solutions include:

– Friendly Visitor program connects volunteers of any age with people who will benefit from companionship. They do things with their recipient a friend might do, including having a cup of coffee and chatting, playing cards, going out to lunch, or taking a walk.

– Senior Companions engage in the same activities as Friendly Visitors do. The only differences are they receive an hourly stipend and must meet the age (60) and income requirements of this federally-run program that enables lower-income individuals to volunteer. The time commitment is about an hour per week.

– Vet to Vet Volunteers keep veterans connected to their military community and

provide the opportunity for veterans to offer companionship to a veteran buddy. Similar to Friendly Visitors, they visit for about an hour a week with a fellow veteran.

– AmeriCorps members provide a block of time to sit with an individual who needs supervision so their caregiver can take a break or go out of the house to do errands such as grocery shopping or going to the doctor. Volunteers are trained to provide practical, non-medical care and receive a stipend through AmeriCorps.

– Errands Volunteers provide assistance with transportation to help older adults go grocery shopping, go to the doctor, or do other essential errands.

Volunteers in all the programs are eligible for a monthly mileage reimbursement and receive training and support directly from Senior Solutions.

Contact Green Mountain RSVP to learn more about these programs and to set up a meeting with the Senior Solutions program coordinator. Email cmitchell@svcoa.net or call 802-674-4547.

Kooper, Karter, Karson, and Kaitlyn. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: There will be a private family service in the spring.



• **Ethel Jean Stevens, 83**, of West Dover. Died peacefully Tuesday night, March 14, 2023, in the comfort of her home following

an extended illness. Jean was born in the Littleville section of Chester, Massachusetts on July 4, 1939, the daughter of Harry and Weltha (Griffin) Woods. She was raised and educated in Chester, graduating from Chester High School. Jean went on to attend Cooley-Dickenson Hospital School of Nursing in Northampton, Massachusetts, where she received her RN diploma. She first was employed at Cooley-Dickenson Hospital and later at Noble Hospital in Westfield, Massachusetts. Upon relocating to Vermont, Jean joined the nursing staff at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, from which she retired following 31 dedicated years at BMH and 51 total years in nursing. Of her leisure time activities, Jean enjoyed bowling and was involved with a five-member women's bowling team from Northampton. The team competed in several national tournaments, and she was able to travel throughout the United States as a result. She loved working in her garden(s), and the landscaping surrounding her home. She would spend hours with the waterfalls and ponds in her backyard. During her youth, Jean was very active in 4-H and represented Massachusetts at the National 4-H Congress held in Chicago. She also canned and exhibited vegetables at many agricultural fairs throughout the tri-state area, including the Eastern States Exposition. With her sister-in-law, she was a blue-ribbon winner for several years. Jean also enjoyed crafting and exhibited at many local craft fair events including the Mount Snow Craft Fair. Survivors included her companion of 46 years, Bruce Wyman of West Dover; two daughters, Frostine Katchis of Chappaqua, New York and Jennifer Lindsay of Ashford, Connecticut; two sons, Kyle Stevens of Scarsdale, New York and Dwaine Stevens of Bennington; and 10 grandchildren, four great-grandchildren and many nieces and nephews that include a special niece, Stacy Whitmore of Fairfield, Pennsylvania. Jean was predeceased by a son, Daryl Stevens, and a brother, Clarence "Woodie" Woods. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: In keeping with Jean's final wishes, there are no formal funeral services scheduled. A memorial gathering will take place at a future date. Donations to Bayada Hospice, 1222 Putney Rd, Suite 107, Brattleboro, VT 05301. To share a memory or send condolences to the family, visit atamaniuk.com.

Services



• A celebratory gathering for **Jim Ferris** will be held on Saturday, May 18, from noon to 4 p.m., at the Eagles Club, 54 Chickering Drive, Brattleboro. Mr. Ferris, 68, of Brattleboro, died on Dec. 24, 2022 at Albany (N.Y.) Medical Center.

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Milestones are published as community news at no cost to families, thanks to financial support of our members and advertisers. Send them to news@commonsnews.org. Though we ask that content for this column be sent by Friday at 5 p.m., we will do our best to include late obituaries. Please alert the newsroom at 802-246-6397 for post-deadline urgent submissions. We will always do our best to accommodate contributors in their time of grief.

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thy religious neighbor
thy depressed neighbor
thy asian neighbor
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thy indigenous neighbor
thy conservative neighbor
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WSESD sexual abuse investigation may be ‘moving into next phase’

But the school board, citing legal advice, isn’t saying what that phase might be or how long that might take

By Virginia Ray
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—The Windham Southeast School District’s sexual abuse investigation is in process of “moving [...] into the next phase,” School Board Chair Kelly Young told participants on March 20. Young did not, however, explain what that means. Or when it might happen. Noting the investigation remains ongoing, Young said attorney Aimee Goddard of Annis & Goddard/Southern Vermont Law, “continues to gather information and interview individuals” and is “in process of moving the investigation into the next phase” and, “at some point, come to some completion.”

Since the investigation was started about a year ago, several people, including Brattleboro High School alum Mindy Haskins Rogers, who broke the story of a history and culture of sexual abuse in the district in her 2021 essay in *The Commons*, have asked for information at meetings. Those requests included asking for metadata, such as how many people have reported abuse to Goddard and how many former/

current educators have been named in those reports.

On March 9, Haskins Rogers sent a list of additional questions to Young and the board, including what burden of proof is being applied by Goddard to reports to consider them corroborated — “proof beyond a reasonable doubt, clear and convincing evidence, or a preponderance of evidence?”

She also asked what specific steps are being taken to investigate each report and whether potential witnesses who are named to Goddard are being contacted.

At the Feb. 28 board meeting, Haskins Rogers had been invited to submit questions, as had student board representative Ben Berg.

This week, Young said she’d sent all questions to the board’s attorney, which is Pietro Lynn of Lynn, Lynn, Blackman & Manitsky, PC in Burlington, and they were then forwarded to Goddard.

Young said she appreciates the public’s “patience and understanding that the process takes time,” then said she “can’t say more.”

Haskins Rogers said the burden of proof question is “pretty

important for understanding the process,” noting that Goddard is a criminal defense lawyer with a case recently making headlines.

Burden of proof would not be held to a criminal level for any of the potential civil suits under consideration in the WSESD, Haskins Rogers said.

The burden of proof in civil litigation is lower than that in criminal prosecution. Instead of proving a case “beyond a reasonable doubt,” a rape or sexual assault survivor’s case must show that, more likely than not, the assault occurred.

“It’s concerning to me that hasn’t been clarified along the way,” Haskins Rogers said, adding that survivors “deserve to be believed” and understanding what standard of burden of proof Goddard is holding those reporting to is key.

Haskins Rogers also said she thought her questions had been submitted with a lot of lead time and clarity, but Young said she was without power post-storm for 2.5 days, limiting what she could do.

“I think there are some detrimental things in the messaging that call into question how reliable this investigation might be,”

Haskins Rogers said, asking why a criminal defense lawyer was hired to pursue the investigation in the first place.

“I’m not familiar with her other clients, and I don’t think it’s really appropriate for anyone on the board to comment on them because she is an attorney and I’m sure she represents lots of people,” Young said, adding “my recollection is she had experience in these matters.”

Board member Tim Maciel then said this was an executive session matter at the time of hiring and couldn’t be discussed now in open meeting.

Young continued for a moment, however, likening the process to “hiring a contractor,” when one looks at experience and determines a choice. She said the board did so in selecting Goddard, “based on her experience and skills that she would be able to do that job that the board hired her to do.”

Young noted three newly elected board members will start with the next board meeting, and she reiterated what she said at the beginning of the meeting.

“I would foresee we would be moving on to the next phase in the investigation, and I’m not

sure what that would entail,” Young said.

Berg then asked for clarification.

“You’re saying you can’t speak to any of the findings, an overview of the progress, process, or possible next steps?” he said.

“Correct,” Young replied.

“And that’s for legal reasons?” asked Berg.

“Yes,” said Young.

“Why?” Berg asked.

“The investigation is ongoing and there are certain things we can talk about [and] others we can’t,” Young said before moving on to another topic. “That’s the legal advice we’ve paid for.”

To report knowledge of sexual abuse/harassment in the WSESD, call 802-451-0905, send an email to report@wsest.info, or visit southernvermontlaw.com/wsest.

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Cars in Dover.

MEGHAN KINSMAN/SPECIAL TO THE COMMONS

■ Snowstorm

recorded 36 inches of snow, while East Dover saw 30 inches of snow and Athens got 25 inches of snow. Rockingham and Dummerston also got around 20 inches of snow, while Putney and outlying areas of Brattleboro received 16-18 inches.

The heavy wet snow, combined with wind gusts between 20-30 mph, took down trees and power lines and left many towns without power for several days.

Green Mountain Power said it brought in 500 additional tree and line crews from all over the country to help in the power restoration effort. At the height of the storm on March 14, about 83,000 GMP customers statewide — more than 32,000 in Windham County — were without service.

By the end of the day on March 17, fewer than 2,000 customers were still in the dark, and it took all day on March 18 to finally restore power to all but around 100 homes. Guilford was the last town in Windham County with a substantial number of outages by the morning of March 19, just shy of a week after the snow started falling.

The large number of trees brought down by the gloopy snow complicated matters for utility workers. According to Brattleboro Town Manager John Potter, 48 roads were obstructed by fallen trees and power lines in the immediate aftermath of the storm on March 15, with 81 recorded incidents.

Brattleboro Public Works and the Brattleboro Fire Department worked through the days and nights on March 14-16 to reopen roads and respond to emergency calls. By March 18, only Fox Farm Road and Barrows Road were still closed to traffic.

“The town is fortunate to have

such dedicated professionals responding to emergency situations with care, attention, and commitment to the safety and welfare of Brattleboro residents and visitors,” Potter said in a news release.

In Brattleboro, the American Red Cross opened a shelter on March 15 at Brattleboro Union High School. According to a news release, about 30 people visited the shelter on March 15, and three people stayed overnight. The Red Cross closed the shelter at the end of the day on March 16.

The Brattleboro Senior Center and Brooks Memorial Library were used as day shelters, as well as charging stations for electronic devices, in the aftermath of the storm.

In Dummerston, town road crews were unable to plow some roads until March 16. According to Road Foreman Lee Chamberlain, GMP would not allow plows to go through until they were able to determine it was safe to do so. He said that any travel on these unplowed roads was possible, but strictly at one’s own risk.

Vermont State Police were kept busy during the storm dealing with motor vehicle crashes.

According to a news release, state police responded to 206 crashes statewide between midnight on March 14 and 4 p.m. on March 15. Ninety-nine of those crashes were in southern Vermont, and nearly half of the crashes occurred on Interstates 89 and 91.

Flood concerns?

Despite the huge amount of snow that fell in the storm, the NWS-Albany office said on March 16 that “there is good confidence that the snowmelt flood

threat remains low,” thanks to “an orderly melt of snowpack and modest within-bank rises on creeks and streams.”

According to NWS-Albany, the warmer-than-normal winter meant that even with 4 feet of snow falling on high elevation

areas in southern Vermont, it merely brought the snowpack levels to the normal level for mid-to late-March.

Those warm temperatures also reduced the threat of ice jams on streams and rivers, the weather service said.

FROM SECTION FRONT

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Sterling

FROM SECTION FRONT

“any school nutrition employee who has taken an idea, developed it into a goal, and carried out a specific project to help their program expand student access to quality school, after-school, and/or summer meals as well as elevate their community’s image of school meals and school nutrition personnel.”

That description clearly matched Sterling’s stated vision.

He is quick to point out that any recognition he has received has to be shared with all the food service employees in the district who “treat people like people, not like robots,” he said.

Sterling was the food service director at Westminster Center School when he took over managing the entire WNESU food program in 2018.

School lunch programs are only a little over a century old, started at first by philanthropic organizations that recognized the scourge of hunger and malnutrition among children and how it affected the overall health of the nation.

In 1946, the National School Lunch Act became law, making it a matter of national security “to safeguard the health and well-being of the Nation’s children.” It provided grants and other funding for school lunch programs.

Most often those programs were run directly by the schools. Many will remember the ubiquitous “lunch ladies” — local women who served school meals that they usually prepared themselves by hand on site.

In time, many of these programs were taken over by outside food service companies that might supply the meals for hundreds of schools, colleges, and hospitals nationally and even internationally.

“Right now there is a lot of both,” Sterling said. “Some of the districts like ours have an independent food service, while some districts still contract out food service.”

Sterling said that since the launch of his program, another half dozen or so districts have moved in the direction of independent, local food service, and “it seems to be a trend,” he said.

“It’s been a wild ride,” Sterling said, noting that the Covid pandemic definitely affected the program. “Every year has been

different, as you can imagine.”

Taking care of staff

Having very high staff retention is one of the strengths of the WNESU program, Sterling said, noting that one of his priorities is the professional development of his workers.

He noted that kitchen staff members Wendy Herbert, Thristan Coke, Pam Kissell, and Jacob Sherwood are the backbone of all his programs, during the school year or during breaks.

“We offer good pay and good benefits,” he said. “My job is to look out for the staff so they can look after the kids.”

He noted that he had been “ambitious with wage and benefits.”

“Anytime you’re a trailblazer you catch some flack,” Sterling said. “But in my view it’s the way to go.”

His staff agrees.

Kissell has worked in school food service for decades, including the last four years at BFUHS alongside Sterling. She has worked for both independent food programs and for the large contract companies.

“I’ve worked for both, and they are all mostly good,” she said. “But with the contract companies, every new company that came in, things were done differently.”

The WNESU program is her favorite, she said.

“I love it here,” she says of her experience. “I love the food here. The kids love it. It’s fresh and made by a chef, and it shows.”

Sterling said he is also working hard to promote food service work as a viable career for students. Some students come in and work with the program as part of their life skills education.

“I’m trying to get young people to see that this is a career,” he said. “It’s a great job. People in this field will mentor you.” He noted that one woman has had a successful food service career in the district for 37 years.

The need doesn’t end

People need to eat during vacations and summer break as well as during the school year, Sterling said, and to that end he has developed a “huge summer food program.”



ROBERT F. SMITH/THE COMMONS

The cafeteria at Bellows Falls Union High School.

He began to implement the idea during Thanksgiving break in 2020 in the form of food boxes — one for each child in the family, with enough food for three meals for several days.

The program proved not only popular, but also necessary. The district repeated the program during the other breaks that school year, with similar good results. During the summer break of 2021, Sterling and his team provided some 500 free meals each week.

That program, and others, continue to expand.

“We try to do anything,” Sterling said. “Catering, vending. We’ve contracted to do the food for other schools, including in Keene.”

While feeding people is the top priority, Sterling explains that expanding his program in innovative ways like this has helped make a difference in revenues.

Covid also presented “more opportunities and some extra

money,” he said — the biggest being the funding of meal kits that families could pick up at local schools.

The program provided multi-day meal kits — one per child — for a family could take home, he explained.

“It’s hard to get families to show up at school to pick up food,” Sterling said, but the need was such that his crew prepared 1,100 meal kits a week, and many local families were motivated to pick them up.

The BFUHS cafeteria served as a staging area, and in the shade of tents set up outside in the parking lot, the WSESU team distributed the food as the cars came through.

“That’s, like, 500 cars coming through here one day each week to pick up the kits,” he said. “Each kit was good for seven days of meals for one person.”

“Between June 21 and Aug. 29, 2022, we served over 143,000 free meals to our kids,” he said. “We spent over \$125,000 at local

farms.”

“That program allowed us to buy a lot more local food,” Sterling said. “We bought local potatoes, apples, corn, cabbage, eggs and more, often in bulk.”

The kitchen bought a new automated potato peeler in order to benefit from buying local products in bulk.

Buys local and fresh

Sterling purchased a lot of products from the food hub Food Connects, a nonprofit in Brattleboro that focuses on food education, distribution, and local food-to-school programs.

Purchases included apples and blueberries from Green Mountain Orchards; Vermont eggs; organic milk from Miller Farm; and Vermont cheese and yogurt from 5 Generations Creamery, Maplebrook Farm, Cabot Creamery, Grafton Village Cheese, and Commonwealth Dairy.

“We also purchased directly from Harlow Farm, Pete’s Stand, Walpole Valley Farms, and The Bread Shed,” Sterling said. “Our other big vendors were Upper Valley Produce and Performance Food Group.”

Sterling said that he just found out that his WNESU program bought 27% of its food from local sources — the highest percentage of any school in the state.

In actuality, that figure is quite a bit higher, Sterling said. The program officially considers only product purchased in Vermont as “local.”

Since Windham County borders New Hampshire and Massachusetts, Sterling does a lot of his purchasing from many local farms nearby in those two states. He says that would add another 10% to 15% of locally purchased food to that 27% figure.

“There’s a real need for this in our communities,” he said, noting that a lot of other schools around Vermont also did the meal kit program.

Many of those programs were quite profitable, but Sterling noted that WNESU “put so much local food” into the kits that “we didn’t make a lot of money, but people got great local food!”

His crew went the extra mile helping to educate the families as well. They printed out new menus each week to attach to each kit, describing the ingredients within.

They also provided education about how to make your own popcorn, “which is so much better and so much cheaper” than buying packaged popcorn, Sterling said. During the school year, the lunch program includes a popular salad bar, stocked with local produce and other products.

“We’re showing people how practical it is to cook for yourself and your family,” he said.

Universal school meals

Sterling’s vision for school food is far from accomplished.

“The big thing right now is always striving to get the universal school meals program to be permanent,” he said. “During Covid, all meals were free. I’d like to see that permanent. One hundred percent.”

Sterling noted that so many other things in school — bus transportation, books, computers, and more — are provided free to students.

Some 75% of students eat lunch at school, and 50% eat breakfast there as well. Sterling said he considers the investment — less than \$200 per pupil per year — a tremendous value to both students and the education system.

The \$25 million to \$29 million the program costs Vermont is a “very small percentage of the education budget. These are the students who directly benefit,” he said.

“It’s money well spent,” Sterling said. “Everything in school runs better when the kids are well-fed. A lot of kids only eat when they are in school.”

Among the most important reasons for universal school lunches is that there is “no stigma towards poorer students with a free lunch program,” he explained.

“We’re creating a social divide right in the school system. The way we do it, free lunches are a stigma, and that’s horrible for kids,” Sterling said.

“Universal lunches empowers kids to take control of their life. The return on investment for a free lunch program is immeasurable.”

“Food service is probably the most regulated program on the planet,” Sterling said. “It’s the most morally correct thing you can do — get children meals while they are in school.”

Putney future

Koloski said that group, which has met and applied for some grant money, will work with local property and business owners as well as regional and state experts on a plan to address vacancies in the downtown.

This group, she said, could plan efficient use of space for housing and retail, as well as improve walkability and pedestrian safety.

Additionally, the group could work to beautify the downtown with murals, public green space, public art, and tree and flower planting.

Regarding filling vacancies, many residents expressed a need to focus on local services such as a salon, laundromat, café, and restaurants.

Katy Emond is chairing the task force to develop a community center, and Koloski said they are “off to a good start,” noting Emond has been looking at this possibility “for a while.”

The group is now connecting with various groups in town and assessing needs.

A community center or hub could provide a space for events, connection, gathering, programming, and sharing information and resources.

Tasks include exploring the development of a new community space or reinvestment in and expansion of the current Putney community center.

In the three community meetings, residents shared particular interest in a community kitchen and indoor recreation space, as well as space for young people to gather and hold youth-focused events and programming.

The task force to develop housing solutions is being chaired by Ari Jackson with support from Marcella Eversole.

This group, said Koloski, is looking at a housing assessment with regard to need and potential solutions.

Many residents have expressed a need for more affordable and safe quality housing for seniors and people of all ages and income levels.

This group will focus on developing housing solutions that meet the needs and character of the Putney community. The group could work with regional and state partners and experts to assess current needs and explore options, including new development, cohousing models, multigenerational housing, a Community Trust, and more.

Additionally, the group could focus on a review of zoning by-laws and other regulations to improve housing development opportunities and to identify any infrastructure needs there may be to support housing solutions.

Koloski said there is no estimated overall cost yet for any part of the project.

“Each group has some work to do to get to a project that will have a price, and each will have different aspects of the work,” she said.

“Some projects won’t have a price tag,” Koloski continued. “A downtown group might put on a summer concert, for instance. It’s up to the groups to determine what that will look like.”

VCRD is a nonprofit, non-partisan organization dedicated to the advancement of Vermont communities. In the past 20 years, the group has worked with more than 85 communities throughout the state, bringing residents together through a facilitated and structured process to share ideas and move toward common solutions.

The in-depth community engagement process is only brought to a town that’s invited

FROM SECTION FRONT

VCRD to do so, usually by the Selectboard, as was the case in Putney.

This VCRD service is free. Our Future Putney brainstorming gatherings were paid for with support from the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Northern Borders Regional Commission, the Vermont Community Foundation, and VCRD supporters and donors.

“For example, Vernon wanted to build a downtown,” said VCRD Operations Director Margaret Gibson. “That’s a long-range project. So you bring people to help them think long-term about how they might approach that. Or it could be a low-hanging fruit as a priority.”

“And there’s nothing that says the town has to spend money on anything. In Montgomery, a wastewater system for downtown was prioritized [...] and they ended up getting a very large federal grant to make that happen.”

“A lot of times what you find is that when towns line up for action behind an idea, resources follow,” Gibson said.



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COLUMN | Creative Conversations

'You can't pin us down

Peter Siegel of The Gaslight Tinkers talks music, influences, and playing at The Stone Church

ONE OF Brattleboro's well-known local bands, The Gaslight Tinkers, returns to the Stone Church on Friday, March 24 to help locals and tourists alike kick off the spring season with a dance party. As described on the venue's website, the group's sound ranges "from traditional old time to heavy folk to finger ripping bluegrass."

The band's lineup includes band members Peter Siegel on guitar, mandolin, and vocals; Garrett Sawyer on bass; I-shea on vocals and percussion; and Joe Fitzpatrick on drums. Joining them at this particular show will be Emerald Rae on fiddle, Choc'late Allen on vocals, and Clara Constance Stickney on fiddle.

"The Gaslight Tinkers are the quintessential Brattleboro band with sound that flows from funky grooves to Celtic stompers, and they always get the crowd moving," says Robin Johnson, owner of The Stone Church in an email to *The Commons*. "Their blend of global rhythms creates a danceable sound around a core of traditional New England old time and



VICTORIA CHERTOK began covering the arts in Windham County in 2017. Her work is featured in *The Commons* and several other publications. A harpist by training and the mother of two sons, she enjoys volunteering, exploring Vermont's natural landscape, and attending concerts.

Celtic fiddle music."

Johnson noted "the magnetic force of Calypso queen Choc'late Allen," and the return from Burlington of opening band The Wormdogs to open.

The Commons reached Gaslight Tinkers founder Peter Siegel, 52, of Brattleboro, recently by phone to talk about his music career, the origin of The Gaslight Tinkers, playing at contradancing festivals, his friendship with folk singer Pete Seeger, and what the Stone Church is like acoustically.

Here's an excerpt from the conversation.



COURTESY PHOTO

The Gaslight Tinkers

VICTORIA CHERTOK: How did The Gaslight Tinkers start?

PETER SIEGEL: I started the band because I felt like there were all these world traditions which have a common thread and if you can blend these threads seamlessly then you've achieved something. Each one of us brings something genuine to the table.

This band was formed because I wanted music to appeal to a broad spectrum of generations and ethnic groups. A lot of people hear us, and they like Irish fiddle tunes or the Latin music. It's hard to push us on social media because you can't pin us down. We don't get played on a reggae list or Afrobeat list. We are an amalgamation of a few different things.

In our band, Garrett has the Afro Caribbean thing. He cut his teeth in Trinidad, plays funk and reggae, and studied at Berklee College of Music. He has a studio down in Amherst called Northfire Recording Studio.

I-shea brings her New York and Dominican Republic heritage to her music, and Joe is a rock 'n' roll drummer who can play anything. Joe went with us to Trinidad and got a lot of the Caribbean rhythm under his belt.

The fiddlers we bring in kind of just plug in and play. We tell them the fiddle tunes which fit into the set, and each one brings their own style.

V.C.: You mentioned that you play at a lot of contradances and festivals?

P.S.: Contradance is its own world! The dancers are the same 200 to 300 people everywhere you go. They appreciate you but you (the band) are an accessory, there for their dancing experience.

It's a cushy situation because they fly us to nice places, we hang out for a whole weekend, we eat well, and people treat us nicely. They pay us a whole bunch of money to just jam.

A lot of what we do on stage when we perform is honed when we are playing for contradancing. We say "let's try this as an Afrobeat, or let's try this as a soca."

V.C.: Where did you grow up? Who were your early music influences?

P.S.: I grew up in Yonkers, and then we moved to Hartsdale, New York. I used to go to Pete Seeger's house and know folk music like the

back of my hand. I was also a classical guitar player and played jazz. My grandfather was a classical violinist, so I grew up with that music. My mother taught piano, and we all sang.

As a teenager, I got into jazz and started taking lessons down in Harlem as part of the Jazzmobile program.

My mother wanted Pete Seeger to do something in my daughter's preschool. Pete answered the phone and he agreed to do it. I became friends with Tau Rodriguez-Seeger, Pete's grandson, so I hung out at his house a bunch and played some mandolin on his last album. I was in the circle of people around him and go to see the quirkiness of that world.

I was mostly interested in early jazz, Louis Armstrong, big-band stuff. Jazz has a major influence on what I do. Of course, I was also into pop music: The Police, early hip-hop, Run-D.M.C., all that stuff in the late '70s and '80s.

I like everything! There is very little I don't like.

V.C.: What do you like about playing at The Stone Church?

P.S.: I can't say enough positive things about The Stone Church. If I were to rate venues anywhere, I would put it at the top of the list.

There are two reasons: the people who run it. Robin Johnson is a wonderful person who believes in having good music, and he has a team of people there — including the sound and light people, the people who work the door, and Erin Scaggs, who does the promo stuff — who clearly love what they're doing.

They treat musicians really well, they put on good music, and they have a space for the community. Robin keeps things as open as possible. There are so many resources in the space itself: the sound is great, the floor is really nice, it's a beautiful space, and it's all just incredible.

V.C.: I heard you have a new album

■ SEE GASLIGHT TINKERS, B2



Jenny Santa Maria

COURTESY PHOTO

BMAC hosts Ukrainian egg decorating workshop on April 1

BRATTLEBORO—Acclaimed pysanky artist and instructor Jenny Santa Maria leads a hands-on workshop on the traditional Ukrainian folk art of egg decoration on Saturday, April 1, at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., at the Brattleboro Museum & Art Center (BMAC).

In the two-hour workshop, Santa Maria will describe the history and traditions surrounding pysanky, demonstrate decorating techniques, and lead participants in making their own eggs.

This workshop is for adults and teens (ages 13 and up). The fee of \$55 (\$45 for BMAC members) includes all materials, including eggs, hard-to-find traditional and non-traditional colored dyes, and tools. This popular workshop has sold out in the past. Participants must register in advance at brattleboromuseum.org or 802-257-0124, ext. 101.

Pysanky technique is similar to batik. Patterns are drawn on an egg with hot beeswax, which protects covered areas from subsequent applications of colored dyes. When the wax is removed, a multi-colored pattern is revealed. "The finished product, with its intricate designs and symbols, belies the meditative process involved," says Santa Maria.

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Gaslight Tinkers

FROM SECTION FRONT

out?

P.S.: We have a new recording last year. It took us five years to make, and we overdubbed rap and other genres onto it, which makes it our sound. It was done in Garret's studio in Amherst.

Selling CDs is really hard these days, so we are depending on Spotify playing our stuff and putting it on playlists and things like that. We depend on fans who spread the word of who we are on social media and the internet. That's the way to do it these days.

V.C.: Why do the arts matter?

P.S.: I will answer this as a music teacher who teaches K-5th grade at Symonds

Elementary School in Keene. The arts just *are*. There is not a separation between the arts and everything else.

The only reason we classify the arts separately from everything else is capitalism. Things have to be marketed and pushed. We all used to sing, dance, and make stuff. And now we've created a society where you have a musician and an artist but the arts are not something to consume — the arts are who we are.

The Gaslight Tinkers play at the Stone Church, 210 Main St. in Brattleboro, on Friday, March 24. Doors open at 7:30 p.m., and the show starts at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$15 in advance and \$20 at the door. For more information, visit

Weston Theater Company announces lineup for its 87th season

WESTON—Susanna Gellert, executive artistic director of Weston Theater Company, recently announced the 87th season of Vermont's oldest, award-winning professional theater.

"This year's shows sing with the magic of Weston, a magic that brings people together and invites us to share the wonder and excitement that have been the hallmark of Weston Theater Company for over 85 years," Gellert said in a news release. "These are stories full of heart, generosity, and substance. It's a vibrant and varied lineup that we cannot wait to share with our audience."

The season begins with the free Weston Young Company production of *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*, based on Charles M. Schulz's "Peanuts" comic strip, with music, book, and lyrics by Clark Gesner.

Follow the life of America's most loveable loser and his friends as they navigate the ups and downs of childhood with memorable songs that bring this beloved comic strip to life.

This production premieres outdoors at Walker Farm, 705 Main Street in Weston, and then travels to community partner venues across southern Vermont. Performances take place Thursday, June 22 through July 9.

Opening at The Playhouse is a crowd-pleaser that really rocks, *Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story* written by Alan Janes. Transport yourself back to the 1950s with this show telling the story of Holly's rise to fame, his struggles with the music industry, and his enduring legacy as one of the pioneers of rock and roll. This show features all of Holly's hits, including *Peggy Sue*, *That'll Be the Day*, and *Everyday*. Performances take

place Wednesday, June 28 through July 16.

First at Walker Farm is the award-winning and critically acclaimed play exploring how the U.S. Constitution has shaped the country and its people, *What the Constitution Means to Me*, by Heidi Schreck and starring Broadway veteran and Weston favorite Susan Haefner. This play traces the relationship between four generations of women and the founding document that shaped their lives. It also imagines how that document will shape the next generation of Americans. Performances take place July 12 to 30.

In August, a celebrated classic of stage and screen, *Singin' In the Rain* takes to The Playhouse stage, featuring screenplay by Betty Comden and Adolph Green with songs by Nacio Herb Brown and Arthur Freed. This show recreates the glamour of 1920s Hollywood, when silent films gave way to talkies. Performances take place Thursday, Aug. 3 to 20.

Back at Walker Farm in late August, Weston presents *The Porch on Windy Hill*, "a new play with old music," written by Sherry Stregack Lutken, Lisa Helmi Johanson, Morgan Morse, and David M. Lutken. Through authentic Old Time and Bluegrass music, this new musical tells the contemporary story of a family reuniting against great odds. Performances take place Wednesday Aug. 16 through Sept. 3.

Season 87 closes in the fall at Walker Farm with an acclaimed drama in which jazz often speaks louder than words, *Let There Be Love*, by Kwame Kwei-Armah.

Gruff, grumpy, and tired of growing old, Arthur is an immigrant to Britain who has shut

himself off from his family even as he longs for his childhood home in the West Indies. When his headstrong daughter hires an idealistic, young Polish caregiver to look after him, Arthur finds himself reckoning with his past and awakening to a new sense of hope and love.

Filled with the sumptuous jazz standards that pour from Arthur's beloved record player, this intimate and humorous family drama explores the forces of memory and longing that lie at the heart of all immigrant experiences and what can happen when, at any age, we open our minds to the possibility of change. Performances will be held Oct. 4 to 22.

Weston Theater Company

again offers its "Pick-Your-Price" season subscription. Renewal subscriptions are now on sale, while new subscriptions are available starting March 29. Single ticket sales will be available online and by calling the Weston Box Office at 802-824-5288, beginning April 19. Child and Student tickets are available for \$25 and a limited quantity of VTix for Vermont residents are available for \$25 with a Vermont ID.

As community levels for Covid remain low, masks will be optional for all patrons and proof of vaccination/negative Covid test is no longer required. Physically distanced seating remains available upon request, based on availability. Learn more at westontheater.org.

Stage 33 Live presents Bethanie Yeakle with Matt Sharff and Garth Tichy

BELLOWS FALLS—Brattleboro-based singer, songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, composer, and performing artist Bethanie Yeakle will play a rare solo show on March 26 at 7 p.m. at Stage 33 Live, 33 Bridge Street.

This will be an extended mixed acoustic and electric set; some alone, some with bassist/guitarist Matt Sharff siding, and some with Sharff plus drummer Garth Tichy. There will be no opener, so plan on a timely arrival.

Bethanie's powerful and ethereal performances have graced the Falcon Ridge Folk Festival, The Guthrie Center, Club Passim, and other notable venues. Yeakle has shared stages with Tune-Yards, Antje Duvekot, Anaïs Mitchell, Slaid Cleaves, My Morning Jacket, Bill Kirchen, and more.

As a session musician, band member, and sideman, Bethanie has provided vocals, acoustic guitar, electric guitar, banjo, electric banjo, dobro, and lap steel to recordings and live performances spanning genres that include Americana, Bluegrass, Newgrass, Folk, Alt Country, Rock, and Experimental/Psychedelic/Noise. Fun fact: Yeakle was featured extra in the Ang Lee movie *Taking Woodstock*.

Tickets are \$10 in advance through stage33live.com or \$15 at the door. Limited seating; the event will be recorded and filmed. More information about the non-profit, all-volunteer project, and this and other upcoming events can be found on their website.

UMass Percussion Ensemble performs at BMAC on March 25

BRATTLEBORO—On Saturday, March 25, at 7 p.m., the UMass Percussion Ensemble returns to the Brattleboro Museum & Art Center (BMAC) to perform in the Wolf Kahn & Emily Mason Gallery. Admission is free for BMAC members and youth 18 and under, and \$5 for all others. Purchase tickets at brattleboromuseum.org, at the door, or call 802-257-0124, ext. 101.

The ensemble, made up of graduate and undergraduate percussion students at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, will play works for a wide range of percussion instruments, by Richard Rodney Bennett, Ross Edwards, Paul Lansky, Bruno Mantovani, Akemi Naito, and Toru Takemitsu. Performers include Ignacio Corrales, Philip Hanifin, Kira Johnson, Nicholas LaCava, Parker Legere, Tyler Mosca, Maxwell Palmer, and Sejeong Pyo.

"We love hosting this type of

performance at the museum," said BMAC Director Danny Lichtenfeld in a news release. "Contemporary music and contemporary art are a perfect match."

Ayano Kataoka, the ensemble's director, is a percussionist and marimbist known for her brilliant and dynamic technique, as well as the elegance and artistry she brings to her performances.

A leading proponent of contemporary repertoire, Kataoka has participated in several consortiums to commission works for solo marimba or chamber ensemble from such composers as Charles Wuorinen, Martin Bresnick, Paul Lansky, and Alejandro Viñao. She was the first percussionist to be chosen for The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's Chamber Music Society Two. Kataoka joined the faculty of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in 2008.

Davis to perform original songs

GUILFORD—On Sunday, March 26, from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m., Andy Davis will present a program of his original songs written in his traditional and participatory style at Guilford Community Church, 38 Church Drive.

He invites the public to come prepared to both listen and to join in on the choruses. Each song is drawn from local history, American history, personal

experience and heartfelt memory. Davis accompanies his songs on accordion and piano and will be joined by his family and friends. The concert will benefit the Guilford Community Church.

Davis taught elementary music in Brattleboro, Dover, and other area towns for more than 30 years. Calling community dances and playing banjo, piano, and accordion has kept him in touch with traditional music and its place in community life.

In retirement, he has focused on songwriting. His songs speak of life in New England, interesting characters, dear friends, philosophical musings, and an occasional political or environmental commentary. Mixed in with his original songs will be some original waltzes, jigs, and reels — all with a story or memory to relate.

Admission is by donation (suggested \$10-\$20) Masks respected, but not required. Refreshments will be served after the concert.

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TAPE FACE Comedy 4.14
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603-352-2033 TheColonial.org
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CABARET
Book by Joe Masteroff
Based on the play by John Van Druten and Stories by Christopher Isherwood
Music by John Kander Lyrics by Fred Ebb
CABARET is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Tams-Witmark LLC.
PERFORMANCES
7pm - March 23, 24, 25
2pm - March 25
Tickets available at neyt.org


arts & community CALENDAR

THURSDAY

23

Performing arts

BRATTLEBORO Lucy Kirkwood's "The Children": Two retired nuclear scientists take refuge in an isolated cottage by the sea after a disastrous tsunami causes an accident at a nearby nuclear power plant.

BRATTLEBORO Join the Brattleboro Women's Chorus: Come sing with us! In-person rehearsal. Open to anyone who wants to "try chorus out" with no obligation to join.

GULFORD Weekly Tai Chi Classes for Beginners: Here's a great opportunity to try tai chi for the first time, or brush up after a long break.

BRATTLEBORO Windham County Humane Society Raffle: One lucky winner will take home a check for 50% of the Rescue Raffle Pot and the other 50% will go directly toward helping homeless pets in our community.

BRATTLEBORO "She Means Business" - Celebrating Women's History Month & Women-Owned Businesses in Southern Vermont: Inaugural event offers opportunities to learn about, connect, celebrate VT's women-owned businesses as part of Women's History Month.

THURSDAY CONT.

to anyone who owns a business, is thinking of starting one, or just wants to see what VT's small business community has to offer. Schedule: 10-11:30 a.m.: Business Planning Basics Workshop.

PUTNEY Putney Monthly Free Produce Distribution: Monthly food drop of free produce and some non-perishables.

BRATTLEBORO "BLOOM" - Exhibit of 17 bright, bold, watercolor flowers by the local group Art Among Friends: These 6 artists - Connie Evans, Alice Freeman, Kathy Greve, Laurie Klenkel, Louise Zak, Lynn Zimmerman - gathered online during the pandemic to create, support, and encourage one another on their artistic journeys.

PUTNEY NXT Curators Series welcomes Poster House's Angelina Lippert: What is a poster and how is it different from a print, flyer, handbill? What makes it valuable? Join Angelina Lippert, chief curator/director of content at Poster House in NYC - the first and only museum in the US dedicated to the art/history of the poster.

FRIDAY

24

BELLOWS FALLS Wild Goose Players present "Urinetown": Side-splitting sendup of greed,

FRIDAY CONT.

love, revolution (and musicals) in a time when water is worth its weight in gold. "Urinetown" occurs during a devastating water shortage brought on by a 20-year drought.

BRATTLEBORO The Gaslight Tinkers w/ Choc'late Allen & Wormdogs: The Gaslight Tinkers' blend of global rhythms creates a joyously danceable sound around a core of traditional New England old time and Celtic fiddle music.

WEST DUMMERSTON Bird Rehabilitation Talk with Wildlife Rehabilitator Fred Homer and Veterinarian Ron Svec: Fred Homer and Ron Svec present a slide show and talk about their work, experiences, and their friendship over the years as a team to provide care to many species of injured/orphaned birds.

WEST DUMMERSTON Bird Rehabilitation Talk with Wildlife Rehabilitator Fred Homer and Veterinarian Ron Svec: Fred Homer and Ron Svec present a slide show and talk about their work, experiences, and their friendship over the years as a team to provide care to many species of injured/orphaned birds.

SATURDAY

25

BRATTLEBORO Kevra & Chappell Make a "French Connection": Flutist Karen Kevra/pianist Jeffrey Chappell perform music by French composers w/ connections to unexpected lands.

BRATTLEBORO Brattleboro Winter Farmer's Market: Diverse indoor farmers market. Local farm produce, meats, syrup, fresh baked goods, fruits, cider, preserves, handmade jewelry, pottery, soaps, more.

SATURDAY CONT.

SNAP shoppers turn \$10 into \$40 each week! 10 a.m.-2 p.m. in the gymnasium. This is the last day of the weekly 2022/2023 Winter Farmers' Market.

The written word "Other Forms of Life Writing" (Online): Led by Barbara Morrison. "In this workshop, appropriate for beginning and experienced writers, we'll explore using journals, blogs, and other forms of life writing."

WINCHESTER Monadnock Tri-State Dance Club and Live Music with Champagne Jam: Everyone is welcome. Nonalcoholic beverages available, 50/50 Raffle.

DUMMERSTON The Evening Star Grange annual Sugar-on-Snow Supper: Seatings: 4:30 p.m. and 6 p.m. Takeout dinners are not available.

BRATTLEBORO Latchis Gallery hosts work by Patti Newton: "Dreamland Circus Tarot": Festive installation features large color images from "The Dreamland Circus Tarot" - a 100-card artisan deck and book.

SATURDAY CONT.

Ideas and education

BRATTLEBORO Teaching People's History: Reconstruction: Participatory workshop for educators interested in learning/teaching more about the era following the Civil War and emancipation (Reconstruction), an era full of stories that help us see the possibility of a future defined by racial equity.

Beyond Description

GULFORD Wendy's Soiree Series and Temple of Artists present: "Samurai: Their Secret Life": Unique presentation of projected images with live narration and shakuhachi (Japanese flute) music.

Visual arts and shows

BRATTLEBORO Latchis Gallery hosts work by Patti Newton: "Dreamland Circus Tarot": Festive installation features large color images from "The Dreamland Circus Tarot" - a 100-card artisan deck and book.

5:30-7:30 p.m. Feel free to bring something to share. Brattleboro Area Hospice provides a broad range of services for living/dying well, focusing on end-of-life, bereavement, advance care planning.

SUNDAY

26

GULFORD Andy Davis presents Original Songs & Tunes: Original songs (and a few original tunes) performed by songwriter/performer Andy Davis.

NOW PLAYING at the MOVIES

Table listing movie screenings at Latchis Theatre for March 24-30, including titles like John Wick: Chapter 4, Quiet Girl, Shazam! Fury of the Gods, and Champions.

Promote your EVENT in The Commons. Your ad can run in the Arts section of the paper (the same section as the calendar), and in our e-newsletter of the calendar and other events. * ADS START AT \$37.50 * AND YOUR EVENT WILL BE SEEN BY 20,000 READERS! We are offering 10% off an ad in the paper, or 15% off a print ad + digital ad in our email blast. Call 1-888-511-5150, or email lori@commonsnews.org, or nancy@commonsnews.org

Vermont Comedy All Stars return to Next Stage

PUTNEY—Gordon Clark and his Vermont Comedy All Stars return for a night of stand-up comedy at Next Stage Arts on Friday, March 31, at 7:30 p.m., Next Stage, 15 Kimball Hill.

Featured performers will include several contest-winning and touring comedians most often seen in the Burlington area.

"We've got to keep laughing to handle the news these days," Keith Marks, executive director of Next Stage Arts, said in a news release. "The Vermont Comedy All Stars bring the best and brightest from around the state and beyond. We've had a number of Vermont comedians go into New York and start careers. We're proud to give them a space in southern Vermont to be seen."

Hillary Boone started life in a log cabin in the Northeast

Kingdom of Vermont where they spent their childhood waiting to escape. After traveling the country and some of the world, Hillary is back in Vermont, making people laugh.

Boone is a regular performer at the Vermont Comedy Club and has opened for comics such as Deanne Smith, Myq Kaplan, and Kyle Kinane. They are a host of *The Moth Story Slam* in Vermont, and a proud member of the Vermont Comedy Divas. Boone likes to think that they enjoy a sort of "local fame," consisting primarily of warm fuzzies when other Burlingtonians quizzically ask, "do I know you from somewhere?" or when anyone comments on their cartoon blog. Their comedy has been described as quirky, likeable, queer and smart, and "simply delightful" by a local comedy critic.

Vicki Ferentinos started her comedy career over a decade ago at the Upright Citizens Brigade in New York City. She has been seen on Comedy Central, WOR radio in New York City, and the Food Network. Her one-woman show "Lady Bug Warrior" was a hit at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. She was called "effervescent and captivating" by the *New York Times*, and most recently performed her new one woman show *Woman of the Woods* to a sold out audience at the Grange Theater in Pomfret, Vermont.

Ferentinos was a top three finalist at the 2022 Vermont's Funniest Comedian Contest, and has performed at the Vermont Comedy Festival, The Boston Comedy Festival and The Portland Comedy Festival. When she's not making with the funny,

Vicki is a professional chef; she was the winner of "Rocco's Dinner Party" on Bravo TV, and writes a weekly column, "From the Mixing Bowl," a mix of funny stories and recipes, for *The Vermont Standard*.

Al Ghanekar has been a stand-up comic in the New England scene for the last six years. He spent eight years in Washington, D.C., as an actor working in different independent films that went nowhere. Since starting comedy, he's opened for national headliners like Lenny Clarke, Jim Gaffigan, and Jerry Seinfeld. His comedy is centered around his confusing life experiences and embarrassments, as well as very unique stories, of being a first-generation Indian American dude.

Marisa Imón's comedy, often expressed through music,

addresses the light-hearted nature of issues like death, mental illness, identity, and spirituality. She's the international Amazon bestselling author of the book *Super Intense*, an award-winning composer, host of the podcast, "Incandescent," and her comedy screenplay recently made the shortlist at Barnstorm Fest.

Her music and meditations have been listened to by millions of people between the various platforms that feature her work, even though you probably never even heard of her since she often works anonymously.

Liam Welsh is a Burlington-based stand up comic. He performs regularly at the Vermont Comedy Club, has been a multiple time finalist in the Vermont's Funniest Comedian Contest, and has featured for national headliners such as Solomon Georgio,

Jay Jurden, and Janelle James. He also hosts a weekly stand up showcase called Free Stuff, every Tuesday at Lincoln's in Burlington.

Gordon Clark is the producer and host of the Next Stage comedy shows and the director of Vermont Comedy All Stars, a nonprofit dedicated to promoting the comic arts in Vermont. He also produces and hosts two monthly shows, the Second Wednesday Comedy Jam at the iconic Nectar's Lounge in Burlington, and the Third Thursday Stand Up Specials at Bent Nails Bistro in Montpelier.

Tickets are \$12 in advance, \$15 at the door and are available at nextstagearts.org. For more information, call 802-387-0102.

SUNDAY CONT. FROM B3

- ▶ 4 p.m.: *Doors open and bidding starts for 50/50 raffle and ends at 5:30 p.m.: Soup/bread followed by desserts. Restaurants/restaurateurs from "up the gauge" of West River Railroad line cater to you: Whetstone Station, Brattleboro; West River Provisions, Jamaica; Newfane Market, Newfane; Harmonyville Store, Townshend; Wardsboro Country Store, Wardsboro; Dam Diner, West Townshend; Jon Julian, Williamsville; Family Kitchen & Pizzeria, Winhall; The New American Grill, South Londonderry.*
- ▶ \$5 to \$10 suggested admission.
- ▶ NewBrook Fire Station, Rte.30. Historical Society of Windham County's website: www.historical-societyofwindhamcounty.org Questions: 802-365-7766, info@historical-societyofwindhamcounty.org.

Community building

W. BRATTLEBORO "Finding Our Way in the Wilderness" (In-Person/Zoom): We will explore the places within us that can feel like wilderness, and learn how we can help in saving and preserving the remaining wilderness. Ancient and modern stories of how a relationship with wilderness within and beyond

can heal and transform us. Led by Rev. Telos Whitfield.

- ▶ 10 a.m.
- ▶ All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church, 29 South St. Information: Go to our website, ascvt.org, Sunday shortly before 10 a.m. to join via Zoom.

MONDAY

27

Music

BRATTLEBORO The Windham Philharmonic presents "Spring Symphony": Works by Schumann, Delius, and Strauss.

- ▶ 7 p.m. Masks encouraged.
- ▶ By donation.
- ▶ Latchis Theatre, 50 Main St. Information: 802-254-1109; latchisarts.org.

Ideas and education

BRATTLEBORO Aliza Fassler discusses Native Bees: Aliza

MONDAY CONT.

Fassler, graduate researcher University Massachusetts-Amherst, discusses: where bees go in winter; how to distinguish a bee from a wasp or native bee from a honey bee; which native bee species might be in your yard. In North America, there are approx. 4,000 species of wild bees critical for pollinating plants in our forests, gardens, fields. Learn about the diversity of bee species in New England and how to help them in your yards and gardens.

- ▶ 7 p.m. Hosted by the Brattleboro Garden Club.
- ▶ Free.
- ▶ Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. Information: More information: Jill Stahl Tyler - jill@globalcow.com.



TUESDAY

28

Kids and families

BRATTLEBORO Sing & Dance with Robin: This lovely class is an enriching musical experience for toddlers and preschoolers and designed to support healthy cognitive, physical, social development. Children (ages 5 and under) will sing, clap, stomp, dance, play along with a curriculum of traditional and modern folk songs. Parents are encouraged to sing and fully participate with their child.

- ▶ 10:30-11:30 a.m. every Tuesday through 4/25 in the Community Meeting Room.
- ▶ Free.
- ▶ Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. Information: 802-254-5290; brookslibraryvt.org.

Well-being

BRATTLEBORO Brattleboro Walk-In Clinic: Primary medical treatment for patients ages 18

TUESDAY CONT.

to 64 in our community who do not have health insurance or who cannot afford their high deductibles or co-insurance.

- ▶ 5-6:30 p.m. on Tuesdays.
- ▶ Brattleboro Walk-In Clinic, 191 Clark Ave. Information: 802-251-8484; brattleborowalkinclinic.com.

WEDNESDAY

29

Performing arts

WILMINGTON Deerfield Valley Players announces auditions for PIPPIN (2013 Broadway Revival) the Musical: Music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz, book by Roger O. Hirson, originally produced by Stuart Ostrow, originally directed by Bob Fosse. Interested actors, singers, dancers, gymnasts and circus performers are encouraged to attend. If interested in a specific role, be prepared to read a scene and sing one song (music director will provide accompaniment) of your choice. Chorus and gymnasts/circus performers, be prepared to show your skills.

- ▶ 5-8 p.m. August 3, 4, 5 performances will take place in Historic Memorial Hall in Wilmington.
- ▶ Old School Community Center, 1 School St. Information: More information: deerfieldvalleyplayers@gmail.com.

Music

BRATTLEBORO Jon Mueller and C. Lavendar: Drummer Jon Mueller is celebrated for his uncommon technique, rigor and virtuosity. For this piece, Mueller employs a variety of gongs, percussion and electronics to create an atmosphere that is paradoxically meditative and cathartic. C. Lavender creates immersive and healing aural landscapes.

- ▶ 8-10 p.m.
- ▶ \$20 (sliding scale also available).
- ▶ Epsilon Spires, 190 Main St. Information: tinyurl.com/4nrvt59c.

Kids and families

BRATTLEBORO Rhyme Time: For children under age 6 and their caregivers. Join us for stories, songs, and scarves.

- ▶ 10:30 a.m. on Wednesdays in the Community Reading Room.
- ▶ Free.
- ▶ Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. Information: 802-254-5290; brookslibraryvt.org.

MEDIA MENTORING PROJECT

What you need to know:
How Social Media is Changing our World for Better or Worse
 Wednesday, March 29
 7pm via Zoom

Join us for a panel discussion that goes behind the scenes of the mass media world and explores how, as a citizen, good critical media literacy can lead to intelligent civic engagement.

Topics:

- How to think critically and interpret messages from social media, mass media or pop culture.
- How to protect yourself and young people from negative aspects of social media.
- How social media platforms curate information for the reader/viewer.
- How social media is regulated v. mainstream media.

Panelists:



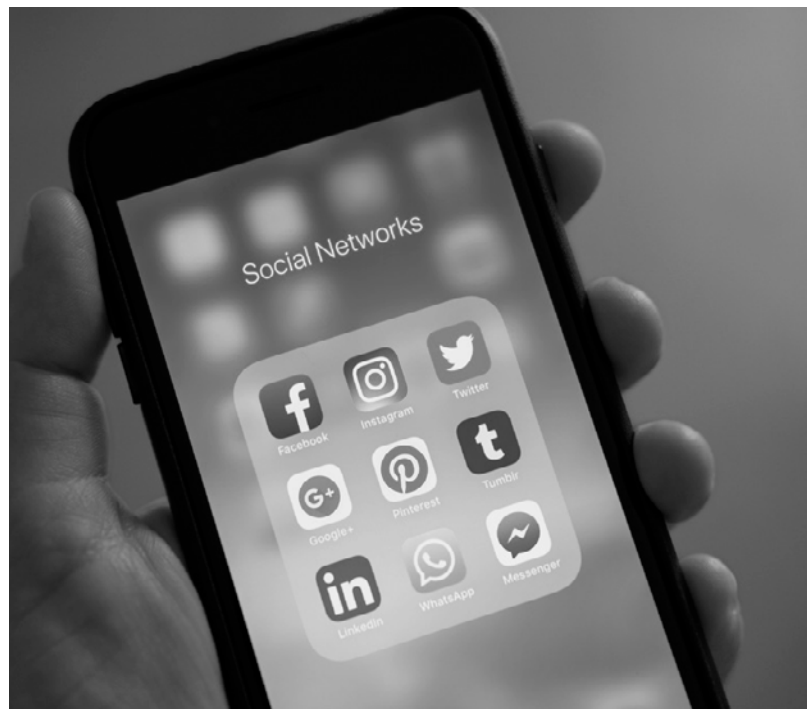
Gyuri Kepes



Susanna Strothman



Ben Boyington



Moderator: Joyce Marcel



Email ziagulazimi9@gmail.com for the Zoom link.

To submit your event: calendar@commonsnews.org
 Deadline: 5 p.m. Friday
 Visit commonsnews.org for more listings with more details

Spring!

Wednesday, March 22, 2023

page B5

(Editor's aside: This section would have been really awkward if we published it last week, as originally scheduled, during a catastrophic snowstorm. Happy spring!)

COLUMN | *Memorable Meals*

A favorite and versatile sweetener

Maple-baked egg cups are a slightly more subtle way to enjoy the flavor, and boiled dumplings are a celebration of maple — lots of maple

WHEN I HEAR that the sap is running, I'm happy indeed. Warm days above freezing and cold nights below mean the sap run is upon us, and it can't come a moment too soon. March in Vermont brings every type of weather possible, with little bursts of perfect early spring.

The technique of boiling the sap from sugar maple trees was first developed by the indigenous peoples of our Northeast and Canada. It certainly is an important component in the *terroir* of our part of the world, and with good reason — its unique and delicious flavor.

It's a lesson in patience though, you need about 40 gallons of sap to produce a single gallon of maple syrup. That's a lot of gathering for a little reward, but it is worth it.

Although dozens of other trees (including other maples, birch, and nut trees) have sap that can be boiled to make a syrup, the maple has the highest sugar content and produces the most distinctive flavor.

The syrup produced each year, even from the same tree, will taste different. It all depends on the weather and the time of the season when it was harvested. Some years, we have a marvelous and bountiful run; other years, not so much. Vermont accounts for more than half produced in the entire country in recent years.

WHEN I WAS A kid, sap was collected in metal buckets and harvested by hand each day. When you first put a new bucket under the tap, you can hear a distinctive ping when the drops of sap hit the bare metal. It was like music, and I'll remember it always.

Although some sugarmakers still have at least a few token buckets to display, most syrup is now collected with tubing strung throughout the sugarbush, which cuts down considerably on labor. A sugarbush is a large stand of maple trees, tapped for the sap.

It's not all about the end product. Sugarmaking has long been a part of our social lives here in New England. "Sugaring off," the process of boiling down the sap to syrup,



DOROTHY GROVER-READ's culinary talents can be found on her blog "The New Vintage Kitchen" (vintagekitchen.org), billed as "[a] Vermont innkeeper's collection of classics reimagined for today's kitchen," from which these recipes are gleaned. Her column has regularly appeared in The Commons' Food & Drink and other special sections for years.

traditionally using wood power, has long been a time of getting together to relieve a little cabin fever and get some important work done.

The hot, moist sugarhouse filled with steam, the smell of the wood and syrup, laughter and intense concentration are all ingrained in my memory. We even have regional sayings related to sugarmaking activities. When a project has an unknown outcome — much like the boiling process and its flavors — we ponder how it will all "sugar off."

MAPLE IS A FAVORITE and versatile sweetener. Yes, it is mostly sugar, but does have a good amount of manganese and zinc, as well as some iron and potassium. Not a health food by any means, it is still a sugar treat, but one with a few little redeeming qualities. It's the sweet after a long winter, and well worth the wait.

This sweet is great in savory dishes, too, baked goods, and by itself running down the sides of a hot stack of pancakes.

Mix it with a bit of miso and glaze some salmon, make a dressing with some olive oil and grainy mustard, use it as the sweetener in a *crème brûlée*, or simply replace sugar in breads, muffins, cakes, and other treats. Bake it into squash, or use in roasting just about any vegetable. Make a glaze for pastries with a bit of confectioner's sugar. It's all sweet and good.

And, of course, breakfast! Breakfast in New England is often accented with maple drizzled over pancakes or waffles, but maple-baked egg cups are

■ SEE MAPLE, B6

COLUMN | *Readers Respond*

At what point does WINTER become SPRING?

Readers told us when the change of seasons becomes real to them

LESLIE SULLIVAN SACHS: When I can plant.

MARTIN LANGEVELD: When people stop complaining about the crazy winter we are having, and start complaining about the crazy spring we are having.

TIM JOHNSON ARSENAULT: When the snow finally melts off my lawn.

MARK FRENCH: When you can swim in the Rock River and there is no more ice.

JOHN STEVENS: For me, it's all about the smell.

MARY C. SERREZE: When the daffodils come out.

DANA SPRAGUE: Opening Day in baseball.

JEAN CONWAY: For me, it's peepers, but daffodils will do.

MARK EBENHOCH: When it quits snowing and there's no more ice! Then it's spring!



Joanna Terry: Winter becomes spring when asking about the road conditions implies mud instead of ice or snow. (Sometimes this change happens multiple times in the same week.)



Cindy Mears: When the crocuses pop up through the snow.

ELLEN KAYE: When the foot of snow that fell melts within a day.

JUDY MCGEE: When it stops snowing! And mud season starts.

BILL MURRAY: When I hear the first complaint about how unbearably hot it is.

CHRISTOPHER CAMPANY: When ground underfoot feels solid again.

ELIZABETH JESDALE: Not soon enough!

BARBARA GANTT: When my snowdrops bloom. They popped up and are blooming, a little earlier than normal.

ELLEN SCHWARTZ: Not tomorrow. [Submitted on March 13.]

AMELIA KINNEY: May.

ROLF PARKER-HOUGHTON: The daffodils are up on South Main Street in Brattleboro. Spring is sprung. This storm will pass. Winter has already lost, it just does not know it.

E. J. BARNES: June.

LINDA EATON MARCILLE: We saw a massive flock of geese flying over the cottage today. That did it for me.

RENEE WOLIVER: There is no spring. We go from winter to summer.

BRUCE LAGORE: Ask Mother Nature!

KATHERINE THEA JOHNSON APLIN: When the bulbs bud and flower.

SANDI RUDSKI CAPPONCELLI: When the air smells like the earth. When the songbirds return and thrill us with their music. When the trees bloom, and when the tree frogs sing.



BRIAN GRATWICKE/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Gene Herman: When I hear the first peepers of the season in my backyard.

KRISTIN GOTTSCHALK: When you stop building fires in the wood stove. When you stop wearing gloves to walk the dog. When you can smell the mud.

FAITH GARDENER: When I can go outside with just a sweatshirt on and no down coat, plus when all my spring bulbs start to bloom.

DIANE LULU LITCHFIELD-SMITH: When the farmers start spreading manure on their fields, the pussywillows are out, and you can hear the peepers in the evening.

BEVERLY GREER LANGEVELD: Spring is the month of May in Vermont.

TERRY MARTIN: Doesn't. Nine months of winter and three months of bad skiing!

DAWN GROBE: When I can comfortably wear flip-flops and short pants.

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Maple

a slightly more subtle way to enjoy the flavor in a savory application. They make a lovely brunch offering, or special Sunday breakfast, a perfectly baked egg sitting in a maple and butter-drenched bread cup.

Turning to my roots, I think of maple boiled dumplings — fluffy little dumpling pillows simmered in diluted maple syrup make a lovely side dish, or even a dessert.

This is an old family recipe from my grandmother, who was a French-Canadian immigrant. It is a traditional recipe from her birth area, Île d'Orléans, an island on the Saint Lawrence River, just a few miles east of Québec City.

Mémé's maple boiled dumplings

This recipe is a celebration of maple — lots of maple — but

it is not as sweet as one might imagine.

When I was a kid, I thought it strange to cook something in maple syrup. But these simple ingredients, combine for a special dish, especially if you like the flavor and aroma of maple.

My mother served these dumplings with pork, but they could just as easily be a dessert.

They are light and pretty to look at as well. Use a dark amber, for the most robust maple flavor.

The dumplings are delicious in this dish, but I use this same recipe whenever I want any dumpling that simmers in a soup. Always a delicious family pleaser.

- ▶ 2 cups flour
- ▶ 1 Tbsp. baking powder
- ▶ 1 scant tsp. salt
- ▶ ½ stick cold butter
- ▶ ¾ cup cold milk

FROM SECTION FRONT

Sift flour, baking powder, and salt. Work in the butter until it is the consistency of lumpy meal.

Add the milk and mix just until it comes together. It will be stiff.

In a 12-in. skillet, combine and bring to a boil:

- ▶ 1½ cups dark maple syrup
- ▶ 1½ cup water

Using an ice cream scoop or large tablespoon, drop the dumplings into the syrup. Don't crowd them; they will swell in the cooking process.

Cover, reduce heat to a simmer, and don't remove the lid for a full 20 minutes. No cheating! (I don't know what happens if you do, but my mother gave this instruction sternly.)

When they are done, place the dumplings in a serving dish and top with a little of the cooking syrup. Over the top, grate the zest of one lemon. This is my twist, and I think it balances the sweet. Makes 24.

Maple-baked egg cups

This recipe is a little sweet, a lot savory, and very satisfying! I like my addition of a local, nutty Swiss cheese and the chives best, but you can also use a cheddar and any herbs you like. Use any locally sourced breakfast meat you can find, or make it vegetarian with soy sausage or even some lovely sautéed mushrooms.

Use the best free-range eggs



Mémé's Maple Boiled Dumplings

DOROTHY GROVER-READ

available — the taste really is better. (Do avoid jumbo eggs, however, or you will have trouble fitting everything in the cups.)

- ▶ 2 sausages (breakfast or vegan)
- ▶ 6 slices soft whole-grain bread
- ▶ ¼ cup melted butter
- ▶ ¼ cup dark Vermont maple syrup
- ▶ 3 ounces local Swiss-style cheese
- ▶ 6 medium eggs
- ▶ Minced chives or parsley

Preheat your oven to 375 degrees. Use vegetable spray to coat every other cup in a 12-cup muffin tin.

In a skillet over medium-high, cook the sausage until crisp, then drain on a paper towel. Crumble and set aside.

Remove the crust from the bread if you wish. Flatten the slices with a heavy rolling pin. You want them quite thin.

Mix the syrup and butter and spread this mixture liberally on both sides of the bread.

Tuck the prepared bread slices into the sprayed muffin tins, folding each to create a little vessel. Distribute the sausage evenly into the lined cups. Divide and scatter the cheese over the sausage.

For each cup, crack an egg atop the sausage and cheese. If your eggs are large, first pour off a bit of the white. Sprinkle a bit more cheese on the top and a few herbs.



Maple-Baked Egg Cups

DOROTHY GROVER-READ

Bake for 15 minutes and a little longer for the whites to set, but don't let the yolks go too far. If you like your yolks very runny, this is probably all

the time you need. For a more pudding-like texture, it may take a full five more minutes in the oven.

Top them with a few more herbs.



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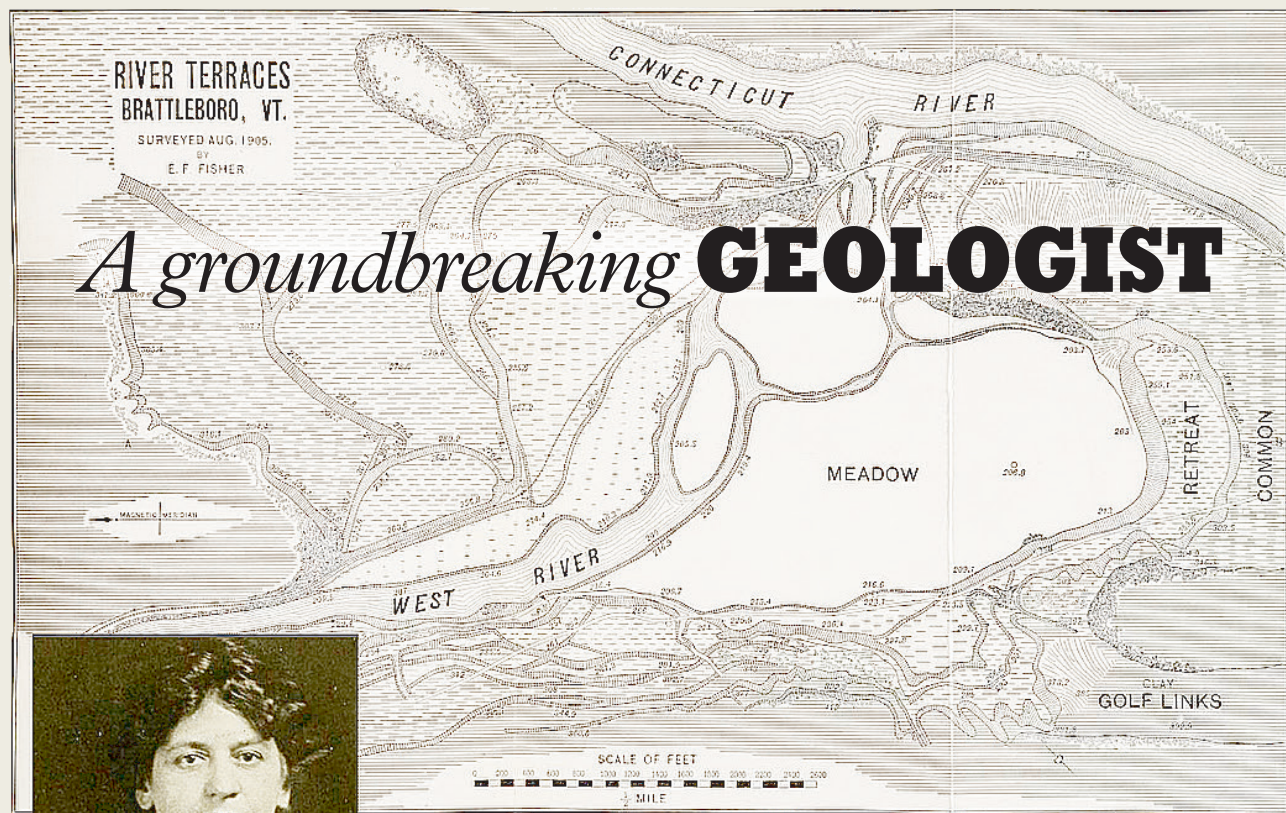
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ESSAY



A groundbreaking **GEOLOGIST**



Elizabeth Florette Fisher's survey map of the West River's confluence with the Connecticut River in Brattleboro in 1905. The map illustrated her paper, "Terraces of the West River, Brattleboro, Vermont," published the following year in *Proceedings of the Boston Society of Natural History*.

Elizabeth Florette Fisher made her academic mark with her scholarship of the terraces along the West River. She later defied gender expectations as a professor, mentor, textbook author, and — complicated though her legacy is — a conservationist.

East Dummerston
IN THE SUMMER of 1905, a young woman might have been spied clambering up and over the many flat terraces along the West River where it joins the Connecticut, in the area known today as the Retreat Meadows.

Each terrace represents a former position of the West River; she was working out that history as a test of a new theory on the formation of such terraces.

What Elizabeth Florette Fisher was doing was most unusual. Field geologists were few in America; fewer still were women. Her work was published in 1905; she presented copies to the Brattleboro Free Library, now Brooks Memorial Library.

You can go there and read the paper, with her signature on the cover. You will see that it includes a series of

JOHN S. WARREN is a geologist — "retired but still active," he says — who came to Vermont originally to teach at Marlboro College. You can learn more about Elizabeth Florette Fisher's work on the West River in a podcast created as part of the Brattleboro Words project at bit.ly/707-fisher.

meticulous maps that show the location of the West River at the times of the formation of each terrace. If you go to look at the kiosk at the boat landing on Route 30, you will recognize one of those historic maps in use as the backdrop of another history

— that of use by the Abenaki people.

One hundred years ago, the prospects for a woman scientist were severely limited. Among women geologists, the horizon was so restricted as to give rise to a stereotype — that a woman geologist would

publish a single scholarly paper and then disappear into a women's college.

The large universities hired only male teachers, and women's colleges could not command the kind of funds to carry on scholarly research. Thus, no publications were forthcoming.

THE EARLY TRAJECTORY of Elizabeth Fisher's career seemed to be fitting that stereotype faithfully. She

■ SEE FISHER, C2

LETTERS FROM READERS

Timing unfortunate for firefighters union's support of town-operated ambulance

Recently, the union of the Brattleboro Firefighters issued a letter expressing its support for a town-operated ambulance service. Although we deeply appreciate the work of our firefighters in protecting us from fire and responding quickly to emergency medical events in town, we regret the timing of this endorsement by the union.

Few citizens in town have read the full AP Triton report, which describes four options for an ambulance service. There has been no public meeting other than AP Triton's presentation of its report at one Selectboard meeting. At this meeting, there was not a full analysis of the report, and there was only enough time for the public to ask one or two questions.

Now that the firefighters have expressed their preference, we are concerned that it may be hard for citizens who want to fully explore the costs of all options to be open about their concerns and preferences because they may fear appearing as if they don't appreciate all the excellent work of the fire department.

I hope that the new Selectboard will soon schedule meetings about the AP Triton report and make written copies of these reports available, so that citizens can be fully educated and thus help the Selectboard make an informed decision.

Judy and Jack Davidson
Brattleboro

What happened with EMS, and what have we (or should we have) learned?

Having been elected recently to serve on the Brattleboro Selectboard, I'd like to update your readers on one of the concerns that led me to run. With regard to emergency medical services in Brattleboro, I asked: What happened in the process of reaching a new agreement,

and what have we learned from it?

The response to my question has often been that Selectboard members and the town administration can't talk about it because of the separation agreement reached with the previous town manager. Privacy concerns and the possibility of a lawsuit have limited open discussion of this matter, which remains of importance to the town. I regard this situation as regrettable and unfair to both the Selectboard and the community.

Others, however, in the media and among the public have shared what they know. Having reviewed the available information, I believe I now have an adequate understanding of what happened and what we learned, or at least what we should have learned.

Simplifying things somewhat, I believe there are lessons in the hiring of a new town manager, in introducing and orienting a new town manager, and in crafting non-disparagement agreements should they be needed in the future.

The discussion when our former town manager resigned his position a year ago was that it simply "wasn't a good fit." I have no reason to doubt that's true, and it would seem to be an inherent risk in hiring a new employee for any position. I would therefore advocate a probationary period during which either party could end the relationship without further ado and without any negative consequences for either side.

Second, a new town manager both needs and deserves adequate supervision and communication with the Selectboard about what is happening and why. I believe there was a breakdown in this area with regard to emergency medical services during the period from Feb. 9 to March 25, 2022. Had clear communication been maintained on this matter there's a chance (though not a guarantee) that we could be in a better place now, with an easier path forward from here.

Finally, with regard to non-disparagement agreements, I would like to see them limited to the expression of opinions and conclusions, but not include the citing of facts. We should

■ SEE LETTERS C2

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

'This may be the most important vote I cast this year'

Quick access to guns combined with depression and other forms of mental illness can and does result in tragedy. A House bill intends to save lives.

Westminster
IN 2018, the president at the time was perpetuating stigma and causing fear, blaming mass shootings on people with mental health challenges.

At the time, I was a teacher and mental health advocate, and I asked to speak at Putney's March for our Lives rally.

I addressed the crowd of 400 Vermonters, speaking about an issue close to my heart.

In my talk — "Guns and Mental Illness: It's Not What You Think" — I raised

MICHELLE BOS-LUN, a Democrat, is one of the two members of the Vermont House of Representatives serving the Windham-3 district, which comprises Rockingham, Westminster, and Brookline.

concerns about the extraordinarily high rates of people taking their own lives with guns in Vermont. That year, suicide accounted for 89% of gun deaths. That statistic is now slightly higher.

I tried to help people understand that most individuals living with a mental illness

are more likely to take their own lives, or to be the victims of violence, than they are to ever harm another person with a gun.

I raised the hope that the Legislature would consider prevention policies: like requiring a waiting period before purchasing a gun, and like requiring



"The votes we will cast in the House are coming too late to save Andrew Black, but the changed laws will save the lives of others," Rep. Michelle Bos-Lun writes. Black, whose mother is Rep. Alyssa Black of Essex Junction, died by suicide hours after buying a gun.

lockboxes for safe storage when a gun is kept at home, to keep it away from children and others who might be at risk.

THIS WEEK, House Bill H.230 — "An act relating to implementing mechanisms to reduce suicide" — is coming to

the floor in the Vermont House of Representatives. The bill would require lockboxes for safe storage and adds a 72-hour wait limit after completion of a background check to purchasing a gun.

Quick access to guns combined with depression and other

forms of mental illness can and does result in tragedy.

I lost my great-grandmother to suicide by gun before I ever had a chance to meet her.

The bill's lead sponsor — my colleague, Rep. Alyssa Black of Essex Junction — lost her

■ SEE REDUCING SUICIDE, C2



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Letters

be able to put facts on the table for the public to view.

Having reached these conclusions, I'm now ready to dedicate my own thinking to the pending questions about Brattleboro's future.

The recently outlined timeframe offered by Town Manager John Potter for deciding on how to provide EMS in Brattleboro seems appropriate...

By approaching the discussion with good will and open minds, I believe we'll be successful.

Franz Reichsman Brattleboro

How did we let our housing crisis happen?

The current housing situation in Vermont is an absolute joke. The overall vacancy availability in the state has dropped to as low as 0.5% in recent months.

How did we let this happen?

There are several factors involved. They mainly stem from out-of-staters' panic-buying properties in the early stages of the pandemic...

This also falls on the state of Vermont for not enforcing

more control over the landlords, who have now raised the rents so high that the tiny number of properties that are available are not affordable...

Plus, we have a governor who somehow continues to get re-elected despite doing nothing but vetoing everything that shows up on his desk.

Even those hard-working lower-to-middle-class citizens who could afford a room if it were actually at a reasonable price cannot find anything because there is nothing available.

It is so sad seeing posts from single parents and their children on the verge of homelessness due to the lack of housing.

This used to be a welcoming state flourishing with opportunity, but it is now at one of its lowest points in history...

Dagan S. Broad Brattleboro

Brattleboro EMS service: What we were told vs. what actually happened

First of all, let me say my opinion is based on experience in EMS, albeit years ago. I was a volunteer and full time employee of Rescue Inc. for almost 14 years through the 1970s and early '80s.

More importantly, I am a citizen of Brattleboro and have to

live with the decisions of our local officials, whether I like them (the decisions) or not.

We were informed by town officials that the Fire Department in conjunction with Golden Cross ambulance service could save the citizens money by assuming the services that Rescue Inc. had spent over a half century reviewing and constantly improving.

It turns out that the costs involved in the Fire Department assuming those responsibilities will not stay remotely close to what it cost to have Rescue Inc. serving us.

There are already discussions focused on reductions of vehicles and farming out additional backup needs to a department that is a half hour away.

The suggestion that the accumulated experience and expertise found at Rescue Inc. can be replaced by a department with limited EMS experience and an ambulance service with inadequate equipment is downright frightening.

In no way am I denigrating the Brattleboro firefighters. They are as well-trained and -equipped to fight fires as any department in the state, and their professionalism is beyond reproach.

I just hope that our town representatives take a long, hard look before acting on the future of EMS in Brattleboro.

Stephen Martin Brattleboro

Discussion will address our cultural impasse on abortion

It seems public support for the legal right to abortion has again reached a new high within the U.S.

On Feb. 23, the Public Religion Research Institute published its latest findings showing that support for abortion access has for years been rising steadily...

Whereas often discussions on abortion encompass a wide breadth of legal and public policy considerations, ours will be centered on the theological, scriptural, traditional, and other sources of moral and ethical

FROM SECTION FRONT

In our own state, of course, support is much higher. In November, a whopping 77% of Vermonters voted to support a constitutional amendment broadly supporting "personal reproductive autonomy..."

Except beneath this robust show of support for abortion rights lurks a somewhat-less-noticeable reticence.

While most Americans do indeed consistently support making abortion legal in most or all cases, data have also revealed a persistent ambivalence toward the procedure.

According to Pew Research findings, 46% of Americans figure abortion to be morally wrong in most or all cases, with only 31% saying it's morally acceptable.

As scholar and activist Elizabeth Freese writes, "We've been hopelessly muddled in this ambivalent 'morality gap' between legality and cultural acceptability..."

Perhaps, then, what is needed now is a conversation focused squarely on the moral challenge abortion presents.

So our third Courageous Conversation at Newfane Church, on Tuesday, March 28 at 7 p.m., will do just that.

She previously co-developed and managed production of courses for the online Learning Center at the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice and developed abortion access advocacy resources for Christians through Auburn Seminary.

Whereas often discussions on abortion encompass a wide breadth of legal and public policy considerations, ours will be centered on the theological, scriptural, traditional, and other sources of moral and ethical

Reducing suicide

FROM SECTION FRONT

son to death by suicide with a gun in December of 2018 a few hours after he bought the weapon that ended his life.

The votes we will cast in the House are coming too late to save Andrew Black, but the proposed law will save the lives of others.

LIMITING ACCESS to guns at times when someone may be vulnerable to self harm could save many Vermonters.

Vermont veterans have a substantially higher rate of suicide than the general population. In our state, LGBTQ+ youth and adults, people of color, and men are also at a higher risk for suicide than the population as a whole.

In other words, we are not asking, "Should abortion be legal?" We're asking, "Is it right?"

You can RSVP for the event or direct any questions or concerns to me directly at matt@newfane.church.

NEWFANE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH Newfane Matt Deen, pastor

With proposed asylum policy, Biden misses the mark

Recently, The Commons has published several stories about our community's robust welcoming of refugees and asylum seekers. Thank you!

Unfortunately, if the "asylum transit ban" currently proposed by the Biden administration had been in force for the past five years, fewer than a quarter of the asylum seekers currently supported by the Community Asylum Seekers Project (CASP) in southern Vermont today would be here.

They would likely be stuck in one of the countries they passed through on their way to our southern border. They would likely be seeking asylum in a country whose systems for supporting refugees are even more broken than ours.

The desperation and fear for their lives that caused them to flee their countries in the first place would not be diminished, and their chances of finding a safe home would be almost nonexistent.

In general, most people who attempt suicide do not do so multiple times; if people attempt to end their lives with a gun, the lethality rate is high.

I didn't know when I urged legislation to promote safety and decrease gun deaths five years ago that in 2023 I would be one of the 150 House members casting a vote about the issue.

It's time for change, Vermont.

The Biden administration has proposed a federal rule to implement a near-total asylum ban at the U.S. southern border. The proposed rule would deny asylum to anyone who has passed through another country between their country of origin and the United States, unless they can prove that they applied for asylum in that country and were denied.

Implemented, this ban, along with other recent policy changes, will eliminate access to asylum for the overwhelming majority of people who come to this country to seek their legal right to asylum.

In the very first of its asylum statutes (bit.ly/707-asylum), Congress made clear there is no illegal way to seek asylum. In accordance with our obligations under international refugee and human rights laws, Congress affirmed that any noncitizen, no matter their manner or timing of entry, has an unqualified right to seek asylum in the United States.

President Biden campaigned on a promise to restore the soul of America. With regard to this issue, he is sadly missing the mark. This rule is in the comment phase, and now is the time to make your voice heard.

Please join the CASP board of directors in expressing your outrage. Submit your comment to the Biden administration by March 27 at bit.ly/707-asylumcomment.

COMMUNITY ASYLUM SEEKERS PROJECT Brattleboro

Christine Colascione, Ruben Garza, John Hatton, Karen Hoover, Francie Marbury

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Fisher

published the paper on the West River terraces and went off to teach at Wellesley College. She never did publish another geologic study.

Instead, she trained generations of students.

She took them out into the field, including a camping and horseback trip for 12 students to Glacier National Park; that trip, in 1920, has achieved the status of legend at Wellesley.

She instituted and taught a course on conservation of natural resources, which gained such renown that she was contracted to teach it as a series of lectures at Harvard and at the Council of National Defense, a World War I organization tasked with the utilization of resources for the war effort.

A scholarship in Fisher's name — given annually to a senior who was going on to graduate work in geology or a related subject — is still given out each year.

The society section of The Boston Herald reported that she chaperoned a group of students to attend the Harvard-Princeton football game in November of 1906. She must have been beloved of her students.

It doesn't sound much like a "disappearance."

FISHER'S CONSERVATION work led to a textbook, Resources and Industries of the United States,

published in 1919. Its intended audience was junior high school students in geography classes. The book went through two editions, suggesting some success; the second was published 100 years ago this year.

In her choice of illustrations, Fisher seems to betray a continuing fondness for our little town.

Imagine the book being handed out for the first time. One student, idly flipping the pages, suddenly stops.

"Hey, look! Here's a picture of Brattleboro! It's about hay-ing. It looks like the field by the West River!"

Another photo, illustrating maple sugaring, is identified as from Brattleboro. A third Brattleboro photo shows garden vegetables at market. Three photographs of tiny Brattleboro in a book meant for nationwide use.

Fisher did not intend the book to be merely a compendium of facts and figures. Yes, she does have the facts and figures of the resources and their importance, but she uses them, as she wrote in the book's preface, "to show the urgent necessity for the conservation of these resources in view of the complete dependence of our industries upon them."

She wrote a textbook that did not simply report; it advocated.

Elizabeth Fisher became known as a conservationist, one led to a textbook, Resources and Industries of the United States,

HOWEVER.

Almost the first thing Fisher covers is "the watering of dry lands," where she rhapsodizes about the gigantic projects to irrigate the arid southwest, followed directly by "the draining of wet lands," where she describes approvingly the ditching and draining of eastern swamps to get at the rich black accumulation of soil under the water.

FROM SECTION FRONT

(Elsewhere, she made proposals — based on her field work there — for the near-total draining of the Everglades for sugar cane.)

This policy could be summarized as "drain every swamp; water every desert." Not the sort of policy we would associate with a conservationist view today — not even close. Not even, it would appear, consistent with her own admonition for cautious and careful use of resources.

And yet she became known as a conservationist. Perhaps it meant something different in those days to be called a "conservationist"?

Or perhaps not: there was, then, a tension between those whose goal was to discontinue the use of natural resources ("preservationists"; thanks to them, we have a system of national parks) and those who saw a need to use the resources, but with great care ("conservationists"; that is where Fisher stood).

That tension exists today.

ELIZABETH FISHER saw great value in those resources, first, for increasing productivity. She writes, "By hand labor the individual farmer would be fifteen years in growing for the market an amount of wheat which by the aid of machinery he could produce in one year."

Second, those resources can reduce human drudgery: In the coal industry, "breaker boys" picked rocks out from coal passing by on a constantly moving conveyor.

"All day long they sit picking the rock from the coal," she writes. "Their fingers become cut and sore from the sharp edges of the moving coal and rock, and stiff with cold. Rest is out of the question because the overseer is constantly watching."

This description is accompanied by a chilling photo, imagine the effect that must have had on students of the same age, sitting comfortably and warm in

the classroom; surely, they must have seen the value of mechanizing that work, so those kids in the coal country could be free from that toil and go to school, too.

With the case made for mechanization, the critical value of the resources for those machines is evident, as is the situation: the resources are vital; they are not infinite; therefore, they must be used carefully and wisely.

But what of her advocacy of draining and irrigating? How does that fit into her message of wise use?

Well, to Fisher, land and soil are natural resources, like coal, oil, wood, and all other resources, and therefore must be used wisely. To allow land to lie unused when it could be drained or watered was wasteful; underuse was as bad as overuse.

Today's conservationists would probably not agree, but it is consistent with her view of things.

THERE IS A CRUEL irony in this story of Elizabeth Florette Fisher, geologist and conservationist.

Among her pioneering efforts, she was the first (or at least, one of the first; sources differ) woman geologist to be hired by an oil company to do geologic field mapping in the search for oil.

Into the field she went — a familiar place for her — and spent the summer of 1918 surveying what became known as the Ranger oil field, in north-central Texas.

That field turned out to be the largest oil field then known in the United States; through a combination of overzealous drilling and wasteful practices, that huge field was totally depleted and abandoned in just four years.

Its name became synonymous with the wanton waste of natural resources.

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AROUND THE TOWNS

Annual soup fest benefits Historical Society of Windham County

NEWFANE — The Historical Society of Windham County's seventh annual Soup Fest and Silent Auction will be held on Sunday, March 26, at the NewBrook Fire Station on Route 30.

West Townshend; Wardsboro Country Store; West River Provisions, Jamaica; Family Kitchen & Pizzeria, Winhall; and The New American Grill, South Londonderry.

Doors open at 4 p.m., with a suggested admission donation of \$5 to \$10. Bidding and the 50/50 raffle open at 4 p.m. and end at 5:30 p.m.

For more information, contact 802-365-7766, info@historicalsocietyofwindhamcounty.org, or visit historicalscocietyofwindhamcounty.org.

Windham Philharmonic welcomes spring with March 27 concert

BRATTLEBORO — Welcome spring with the Windham Philharmonic on Monday March 27, at 7 p.m., at the Latchis Theatre.

The program features the Spring Symphony by Robert Schumann. The symphony opens with a clarion call for spring and a decisive goodbye to winter storms.

The program also includes "On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring" by Frederick Delius. This selection evokes the lush English countryside in spring.

Admission to this concert is by donation. There will be a bake sale to benefit the orchestra. Masks are encouraged.

Conservation District hosts coffee chat

BRATTLEBORO — Join the Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District to learn more about the services they offer to agricultural producers, land owners, and others.

They will also describe what it's like to be part of their Local Workgroup and how to participate in locally led conservation.

This chat will be held on Thursday, March 30, from 10:30 a.m. to noon, in the Community Room at the Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main Street.

Attendance will be possible in person or online via Zoom. The link for Zoom will be sent out to registrants ahead of time. For more information, email windhamcountynrcd@gmail.com, call 802-689-3024, or visit windhamcountynrcd.org.

Tai Chi for beginners at Grace Cottage

TOWNSHEND — Starting Friday, April 7, Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital, 133 Grafton Road, will host a new, free beginner level Tai Chi class in its Community Wellness Center.

The series runs for six Fridays, from 8 to 9 a.m. "The soft, flowing movements of this ancient Chinese practice are widely acclaimed as one of the most effective overall exercises for physical and mental health," according to organizers.

This Beginner Tai Chi class is taught by Grace Cottage Physical Therapy Assistant Pam Coburn, who is also a Certified Tai Chi Instructor. A Level II Tai Chi class meets on Fridays at 9 a.m.

The series is free. Class size is limited, so pre-registration is required. Call 802-365-3649.

Annual spring fruit tree and perennials sale at Scott Farm

DUMMERSTON — Once again this year, Scott Farm has a broad collection of heirloom apple trees as well as pears, plums, peaches, cherries, and also blueberries, grapes, plus an array of perennials for sale.

All the details are on the Tree Sale page of the Scott Farm website at scottfarmvermont.com/tree-sale. Orders must be placed online and be picked up on May 6 and 7. Questions can be directed to orders@scottfarmvermont.com.



Sugar Season events celebrate historic preservation at Scott Farm

DUMMERSTON — The Landmark Trust USA (LTUSA) invites the community to experience the value of historic preservation — of buildings and cultural heritage — firsthand this April through two free educational events.

"Place-based educational programming is an important part of our work. We can't wait to welcome our neighbors to experience the charm of The Sugarhouse for themselves and explore Vermont's cultural heritage with us," LTUSA Executive Director Susan McMahon said in a news release.

On Sat., April 1, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., the public is invited to The Sugarhouse Open House. The 1915 building was the site of maple sugaring at Scott Farm for many years and was beautifully restored and adaptively reused by LTUSA as a one-bedroom overnight rental, normally accessible only to overnight guests.

Attendees of this event can learn about the property's history and rehabilitation, explore sugaring and purchase maple products from neighboring Bearfoot Farm,

enjoy maple snacks, and more. This event is part of Maple Open House Weekend, an initiative of the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers Association.

On Wed., April 5, at 7 p.m., LTUSA in partnership with Vermont Humanities will host Champlain College professor Michael Lange for an interactive presentation on "The Many Meanings of Maple in Vermont" in person at Next Stage in Putney and livestreamed (registration required to watch online).

Rather than discussing the practical aspects of sugaring, Lange's talk will focus on why maple has become so important to Vermont's identity and how it helps us shape who we are as Vermonters.

LTUSA is also offering a raffle for a chance to win a free night at The Sugarhouse. Entries are 1 for \$10 or 3 for \$20 and can be purchased at both events or online through April 6 at noon. All proceeds support LTUSA's non-profit preservation mission.

For more information and registration, visit landmarktrustusa.org/sugar-season.

Be Sure To Check Our Full Program Schedule @ brattleborotv.org. LOCAL PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS. March 20-26. CHANNEL 1078 CHANNEL 1079. PLEASE NOTE NEW CHANNEL NUMBERS! Here We Are with guest Petria Mitchell, Mon 8p, Thurs 9:15p, Fri 12p, Sat 11:25a. Windham Southeast School District Annual Mtg and FY24 Budget Vote 3/21/23: Tues 7p (LIVE). Harris Hill Ski Jump 2023 - Saturday: Tues 9p, Sat 9a. Harris Hill Ski Jump 2023 - Sunday: Sun 9:30p. The World Fusion Show - Ep 148 - Okaidja Afroso: Mon 9p, Tues 6a, Wed 12p, Fri 12:30p, Sat 6:30p, Sun 6p. Media Mentoring Project - A Photo is Worth a Thousand Words: Mon 6:30a, Tues 4:30p. 1st Wednesdays Presents - Pandemic Architecture: Two Centuries of Disease and Design 12/7/22: Mon 1p, Tues 12p, Wed 9p, Fri 10a, Sat 2p, Sun 7:30p. Brattleboro Literary Festival - A Trillion Trees with Fred Pearce and Lisa Merton: Mon 12p, Tues 3:30p, Wed 9a, Thurs 5p, Sat 7p. Windham County Genealogy Interest Group - Finding Your Ancestors in Immigration Records: Mon 9a, Wed 3:30p, Thurs 9a, Fri 9:30p, Sat 8, Sun 12:30p. Vermontitude - Weekly Episode: Tue 11:30a & 6:30p, Wed 6a, Thu 1p, Sat 12p, Sun 5p. WTSA News: Mon-Fri 12p & 6p. St. Michael's Episcopal Church - Weekly Service: Wed 2p, Sat 7:30a, Sun 11a. Calvary Chapel of the West River Valley - Weekly Service: Tue 9a, Sat 5:30p, Sun 10a. Trinity Lutheran Church - Weekly Service: Wed 10a, Thurs 7a, Sun 3p. Gullford Community Church - Weekly Service: Wed 6:30a, Fri 8p, Sun 8a. St. Michael's Catholic Church Mass: Sat 4p (LIVE), Tue 6:45a & 2p, Thurs 8p. The David Pakman Show: Mon 8a, Tue 9a, Fri 10:30a, Sun 5p. Energy Week with George Harvey & Tom Fennell: Mon 9a, Tue 5p, Wed 12p, Thu 10:30a & 6p, Sat 7p, Sun 11a. Putney Town Meeting 2023 - 3/7/23: Mon 8p, Tues 12p, Wed 7a. Jamaica Town Meeting 2023 - 3/7/23: Tues 10a, Sun 9a. The Commons Crossword: Tools of the NFL.

BRENDAN EMMETT QUIGLEY THE COMMONS CROSSWORD "Tools of the NFL". Across: 1. Separately, on menus; 9. Without a date; 13. Devout words; 19. Those scribbling in books; 20. SXSW's state; 22. Scorcher; 23. Crunch time for the offense; 25. "If it were me, yes"; 26. It carries a charge; 27. "Big Little Lies" star; 28. Greek city-state; 30. Spread out; 31. Sweater style; 34. Open valley; 36. Sulks around; 38. Chilly cubes; 39. "Blonde" actress de Armas; 41. Minor damage; 43. QB motions that make the defense jump; 46. Underhand QB tosses; 51. Stretching exercises; 52. Front-of-bk. list; 53. Lobe site; 54. Classroom coach; 56. "I got ya, fam"; 57. Suffix of sugars; 58. Smug elitist; 60. Roast host; 62. Unsuitable for children; 66. Book drive grp.; 67. People or Cosmo; 69. Viscount's peer; 70. Reproductive cell; 71. Tom Collins ingredient; 72. Trick play where the wide receiver tosses the ball back to another player; 76. Motorist's org.; 77. Actress Brie of "Community"; 79. Actor Morales; 80. Nuptial notice word; 81. Cleared (of); 82. Oil source; 83. Sauna coverups; 85. White water sight; 88. Ring cheer; 89. Up until; 91. Extremely popular; 93. Sheryl ___ Ralph ("Abbott Elementary" star); 94. Warren's title: Abbr.; 95. "Patton" or "300," e.g.; 98. 1997 Sporting News NFL MVP; 101. Interceptions for touchdowns; 103. Poi party; 104. Cross shape; 105. Concord-to-Portsmouth dir.; 106. TD Garden five; 108. Stones singer; 110. Gets into shape?; 114. ___ center; 117. Charles's domain, e.g.; 119. Indian bread; 121. Midbody joint; 122. Egyptian god of fertility; 124. What a football does to enter the end zone for a score; 128. Chicken ___; 129. "Until next time"; 130. Connected 24/7; 131. Device that comes with Dynamic Island; 132. Don't go anywhere; 133. Last qualifier. Down: 1. When Lady Macduff dies in "Macbeth"; 2. Running out of; 3. Without peer; 4. Rom-___; 5. R&B singer Lennox; 6. Tear to bits; 7. Lined up; 8. "Chips" star Erik; 9. Criterion: Abbr.; 10. Maryland athlete, for short; 11. Adage; 12. Horse's fast gait; 13. Upsilon successor; 14. Cornfield array; 15. At the peak of; 16. "Sounds good?"; 17. Ties up; 18. Changes back, in the salon; 21. Boo-boo; 24. Sign up; 29. Round before the finals; 32. Cleveland cager; 33. Genuflection joints; 35. Arise; 37. Blow the bank; 40. Country star Jackson; 42. Use extreme violence, in a phrase; 44. Early crossword editor Margaret; 45. First-stringers; 46. Emergency measure; 47. Fighting; 48. "1984" superstate; 49. Teaser; 50. Orange's home?; 55. Played over; 59. One with a sourdough starter; 61. Like senior statesmen; 63. Chinese flower; 64. Poshmark, e.g.; 65. Numbs; 68. Pau whose #16 the Lakers will retire; 72. Green Monopoly pieces; 73. Keeping to the subject; 74. Fat cat; 75. Agent's successes; 78. Cheeky humor; 84. Red Cross fluid; 86. Heroic deed; 87. Latish rising time; 90. Repairman; 92. Sink holes?; 95. Becomes smarter; 96. Loser to a pair; 97. Stars; 99. Mexican peninsula; 100. Rock's Wet Leg, e.g.; 101. Italian beer; 102. They may be glassy, icy, or fixed; 107. Winter hazard; 109. Painter with a unibrow; 111. Tibet's capital; 112. Some boy toys; 113. Done for; 115. Cornstarch brand; 116. "Très___, merci!"; 118. "Stranger Things" actress Hawke; 120. Lizard-like creature; 123. Sault ___ Marie; 125. Rock bottom?; 126. Chum; 127. Strong cleaner. Last issue's solution: "Fall Back".

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COLUMN | Sports Roundup

Local hoop standouts shine at annual VBCA All-Star games

The Vermont Basketball Coaches Association (VBCA) hosted the annual Senior-All-Star games on March 18 at Champlain Valley Union High School, with three of the four South All-Star teams notching victories.

In the Division III-IV girls' game, the South survived a late rally by the North All-Stars for a 53-51 victory. Hannah Greenwood of Leland & Gray and Riley Paul of Green Mountain were on the South team. Paul scored six points.

The South also pulled out a close one in the Division III-IV boys game, 89-85. Jamison Nystrom and Jake Moore of Bellows Falls, Alex Parker-Jennings of Leland & Gray, and Eben Mosher of Green Mountain were on the South team. Mosher scored eight points.

Brattleboro's Jason Coplan coached the Division I-II South boys team, which rallied from a 45-41 deficit for a 92-85 win. The South team features three of Coplan's seniors — Cam Frost, Tate Chamberlin, and Paul McGillion, who scored 10 points in the victory.

There were no Brattleboro players on the Division I-II South girls' team. The game provided the North's only victory of the day, 78-72, over the South.

The VCBA also handed out their awards for Coach of the Year in each of the state's four divisions for boys' and girls' basketball. Bellows Falls coach Evan Chadwick earned the



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT, deputy editor of this newspaper, has written this column since 2010 and has covered sports in Windham County since the 1980s. Readers can send him sports information at news@commonsnews.org.

honor in Division III boys' basketball as he led the Terriers to the state semifinals for the first time in 22 years.

They also named its "Dream Dozen," which highlights the best basketball players in the state in grades 9-11 for the 2022-23 season. Green Mountain's Callie Spaulding and Colby Dearborn of Bellows Falls were the only area selections to their respective Division III-IV teams.

SVL All-Stars named

The Southern Vermont League recently announced its all-opponent teams for girls' and boys' basketball, as well as for Nordic skiing.

In the A Division, Brattleboro's Reece Croutwors was selected to the girls' first team, with teammates Kaitlyn Pattison and Abby Henry earning honorable mention, while Brattleboro's Paul McGillion made the boys' first team, and teammates Cam Frost and Tate Chamberlin both receiving honorable mention.

Jason Coplan, who led the Brattleboro boys to the Division



Leland & Gray's Maggie Parker (4) and Green Mountain's Riley Paul (11) were both first-team selections to the Southern Vermont League's C Division girls' basketball All-Star team.

I semifinals, was the A Division boys' Coach of the Year.

In the C Division, Green Mountain's Riley Paul and Leland & Gray's Maggie Parker were girls' first-team selections, with honorable mentions going to Bellows Falls' Laura Kamel, Delaney Lockerby and Veronica Moore; Leland & Gray's Hannah Greenwood, Sam Morse, and Mary Sanderson; and Green Mountain's Callie Spaulding.

For the C Division boys, Leland & Gray's Alex Parker-Jennings, Bellows Falls' Jamison Nystrom and Jake Moore, and Green Mountain's Eben Mosher were all first team selections. Green Mountain's Tanner Swisher and Leland & Gray's

Trevor Stillwagon received honorable mention.

Brattleboro had two selections for the SVL's Nordic all-stars, with Gabriele Jeppesen-Bellic making the boys' first team and Katherine Normandeau making the girls' first team.

VPA bans Mid Vermont Christian

When Mid Vermont Christian School (MVCS), a private K-12 religious school in Quechee, chose to forfeit a Division IV girls' basketball playoff game last month rather than play against a team with a transgender player, it attracted international attention.

"We believe playing against an opponent with a biological male jeopardizes the fairness of the game and the safety of our players," MVCS head of school Vicky Fogg wrote in an email to the *Valley News*. "Allowing biological males to participate in women's sports sets a bad precedent for the future of women's sports in general."

However, the Vermont Principals' Association (VPA), the governing body for high school sports, abides by Vermont law, which allows transgender female students to play on girls' sports teams.

Long Trail School in Dorset, the team that MVCS was to play in the tournament, did not encounter any problems this season. The teams they faced, which included Twin Valley and Leland & Gray, raised no formal objections. Only MVCS refused to play Long Trail.

Here's the rub. According to the *Valley News*, MVCS sent a letter to the Vermont Agency of Education in January, seeking permission to receive public tuition funding while also asserting that it reserved the right not to follow all of Vermont's anti-discrimination laws.

"As a religious organization, the school has a statutory and constitutional right to make decisions based on its religious beliefs, including hiring and disciplining employees, associating with others, and in its admissions, conduct and operations policies and procedures," Fogg wrote in the Jan. 5 letter. "By signing this form, the Mid Vermont Christian School does not waive any such rights."

Fogg added that, in the school's view, the extent that state laws conflict with the school's beliefs, "including on marriage and sexuality, the school has not included that language in its handbook or online, nor can it affirm that particular aspect of the Vermont Public Accommodations Act."

The school may feel that way, but the VPA is very clear that its policies allow athletes to play on the team that is "consistent with their gender identity" and prohibit discrimination "based on a student's actual or perceived sex and gender."

As a result, the VPA's 15-member executive committee unanimously decided on March 12 "that policies have been violated at the school level and thus there is an immediate determination of ineligibility

for Mid Vermont Christian in VPA sanctioned activities and tournaments going forward."

"If you don't want to follow VPA rules, that's fine," VPA executive director Jay Nichols told VTDigger.org. "But then you're just not a VPA member. It's fairly simple. That's really all we're gonna really say about it."

The school says it intends to appeal the decision, but I believe state law and the VPA's policies are very clear on the issue of discrimination and that the VPA is on solid ground in making the decision to not allow MVCS to participate in VPA-sanctioned high school sporting events.

Senior bowling roundup

Last week's big snowstorm didn't stop the Brattleboro Senior Bowling League from getting together at Brattleboro Bowl for Week 8 of the winter/spring season on March 16. The Markers (31.5-13.5) moved back into first place, while Slo Movers (29.5-15.5) slid back into second place, followed by Fab Four (27-18), The A-1's (21-24), The Strikers (19-26), Split Happens (18-27), and Trash-O-Matic and 10 Pins (both 17-28).

Carol Gloski had the women's high handicap game (226), while Nancy Dalzell had the high handicap series (623). Fred Bump had the men's high handicap game (252) and series (729). 10 Pins had the high team handicap game (842), while Fab Four had the high handicap series (2,501).

In scratch scoring, Chuck Adams led the men with a 627 series that featured games of 215, 214, and 198. Bowlers with a 500-plus series included Marty Adams (576), Robert Rigby (574), Warren Corriveau Sr. (570), John Walker (544), Bump (543), and Gary Montgomery (508).

Bowlers with 200-plus games included Rigby (213), Marty Adams (207), and Corriveau (212). Rigby also had a 195 game, Walker had a 194 game, and Charlie Marchant, Skip Shine, Marty Adams, and Corriveau each had a 191 game. Bump had a 190 game.

Gloski had the women's high scratch series (513) and game (195). She also had a 191 game. Dalzell had games of 168 and 166.



Brattleboro's Cam Frost (1) and Paul McGillion (31) both played for the victorious Division I-II South team in the Vermont Basketball Coaches Association's annual Senior-All-Star games on March 18.

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