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Brattleboro, Vermont • Wednesday, December 21, 2022 • Vol. XVII, No. 51 • Issue No. 695

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Becca Balint sits down for an in-depth interview for this story during the final days of her congressional campaign in October.

Long JOURNEY



Student Government President Rebecca (then "Becky") Balint, second from left, with other officers, in this photo from the 1985-86 yearbook of Walter Panas High School in Cortlandt, New York.

In January, Brattleboro Democrat Becca Balint will turn a new page in her political career in the U.S. House of Representatives, where she will be the first openly gay person, and the first woman, to represent Vermont. She believes that her experiences in life and in leadership in Montpelier square with the new Republican regime in Congress. Time will tell.

By Joyce Marcel
Vermont Business Magazine

BRATTLEBORO—What's it like to make history? "A moment that will stay with me for the rest of my life was waking up the morning after the election, on very little sleep, and hearing my wife say, 'Good morning, Congresswoman,'" Vermont's new Democratic U.S. representative-elect, Rebecca A. "Becca"

Balint, 54, said shortly after the election. Weeks later, the enormity of what she's accomplished is still sinking in. "I couldn't feel it on Election Night," she said. "I honestly felt so out of sorts! Proud, eager, curious, daunted, worried, excited. I was caregiving between emotions all night. I'm certain that was partly because I was exhausted after running this race for almost a year." ■ SEE BALINT, A4

Brattleboro's Christmas breakfast will likely be its last

The annual Charlie Slate Memorial event, a 40-year tradition that feeds hundreds for free, is facing rising costs and a reduced crew of third- and fourth-generation organizers

By Kevin O'Connor
VtDigger.org

BRATTLEBORO—When Charlie Slate drove his wife to work on Christmas morning in 1981 only to realize no restaurants were open, he didn't foresee the free breakfast he offered to cook the next year would attract 50 people. Or grow into an annual gathering. Or live on after his death. Or that it would anticipate feeding upward of 1,000 people and mark its 40th year this year — and that it would likely be its last because of the snowballing success. Patrons of the Charlie Slate Memorial Christmas Breakfast this Sunday at American Legion Post 5 on Linden Street will sit down to a seemingly simple plate of food. What they won't see: A behind-the-scenes crew of 60 volunteers who wake as early as 2:30 a.m. to prepare 3,200 sausage links, 1,920 hash browns, 270 dozen of eggs, 140 pounds of pancake mix, and 14 pounds of coffee. "It's absolutely amazing how much it has grown into this massive breakfast," Slate's granddaughter Judi Flynn said this week. "There's so much planning and preparation that goes into this," added Megan Walker, Flynn's daughter and Slate's great-granddaughter. So much so, the family can't foresee how the event can continue, what with rising costs and a reduced crew of third- and fourth-generation organizers. (Walker, for example, is moving

No paper next week

BRATTLEBORO—As usual, *The Commons* will not publish an edition for the last week of the year. The next issue of the newspaper will appear Wednesday, Jan. 4, 2023. Deadline for news and advertising is Friday, Dec. 30. All of us at Vermont Independent Media wish our readers warm holiday greetings, a safe end of the year, and best wishes for strength, prosperity, and resilience in the months to come.

three hours away, from southernmost Vermont to northernmost New Hampshire.) This year, all have decided, may be the pitch-perfect time to go out on a high note. Charlie Slate, a car salesman for three decades, began the breakfast in 1982 when he welcomed everyone — from people who were homeless to those who were simply hungry and not wanting to cook. "I'm alone on Christmas Day because my wife works," he told the *Reformer* at the time. "I have places to go, and I just felt bad for people who have no place." The tradition grew as Slate passed his spatula on to area resident Francis Willette in 1997 and

Storm leaves up to 2 feet of snow in Windham County

Five days ahead of the winter solstice, Vermont got its first major snowstorm of the season. A nor'easter on Dec. 16 and 17 brought between 10 and 26 inches of snow to Windham County, with the most snow falling on the highest elevation towns. Snow totals from the storm in Windham County as reported to the National Weather Service in Albany, N.Y. ranged from about 11 inches in West Brattleboro and Rockingham, to 13 inches in West Halifax, 14 inches in Townshend, 15 inches in Westminster, 16.5 inches in Putney, 17.8 inches in Marlboro, and 26 inches in Wilmington.

At the height of the storm on Dec. 16, Green Mountain Power reported that more than 100,000 customers throughout the state were without power as the heavy, wet snow weighed down trees and power lines, particularly in the towns in the western part of Windham County.

Early in the morning of Dec. 19, GMP's online outage center estimated that more than 800 households in Windham County were still without power. By Tuesday, all power in the county had been restored.

Green Mountain Power shared this photo on Facebook during the height of the post-storm power restoration efforts. Even a West Dover firetruck was no match for the heavy snow that hammered Windham County's higher elevations.



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A publication of Vermont Independent Media
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#604 - Business and Advertising
OFFICE ACTIVITY LIMITED DUE TO PANDEMIC
P.O. Box 1212, Brattleboro, VT 05302
888-511-5150 • fax 802-246-1319
www.commonnews.org
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Deadline for the January 4, 2023 issue
Friday, December 30



VIM'S MISSION
Recognizing that a vigorous exchange of ideas and information allows democracy to function and is the lifeblood of a community, Vermont Independent Media:

- creates a forum for community participation,
- promotes local independent journalism,
- fosters civic engagement by building media skills through publication of *The Commons* and commonnews.org, and through the Media Mentoring Project.

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The Commons is a nonprofit community newspaper published since 2006 by Vermont Independent Media, Inc., a nonprofit corporation under section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code.

The newspaper is free, but it is supported by readers like you through tax-deductible donations, through advertising support, and through support of charitable foundations.

The paper is published weekly, with early production schedules scheduled for most fifth Wednesdays of the month.

SUBMITTING NEWS AND TIPS
We welcome story ideas and news tips. Please contact the newsroom at news@commonnews.org or at (802) 246-6397.

VOICES
The Commons presents a broad range of essays, memoirs, and other subjective material in Voices, our editorial and commentary section. We want the paper to provide an unpredictable variety of food for thought from all points on the political spectrum.

We especially invite responses to material that appears in the paper. We do not publish unsigned or anonymous letters, and we only very rarely withhold names for other pieces. When space is an issue, our priority is to run contributions that have not yet appeared in other publications.

Please check with the editor before writing essays or other original submissions of substance. Email: voices@commonnews.org.

Editorials represent the collective voice of *The Commons* and are written by the editors or by members of the Vermont Independent Media Board of Directors. The views expressed in our Voices section are those of individual contributors. Bylined commentaries by members of the Vermont Independent Media board of directors represent their individual opinions; as an organization, we are committed to providing a forum for the entire community. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, Vermont Independent Media is legally prohibited from endorsing political candidates.

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Without our volunteers, this newspaper would exist only in our imaginations.
Special thanks to:
Simi and Mark Berman,
Diana Bingham,
Jim Maxwell, Rob Bertsche,
Barbara Evans,
Cameron Cobane, Shannon Ward, and Hooker-Dunham Theater & Gallery;
Clay Turnbull and NEC;
Brendan Emmett Quigley and Jon Pakh
In memoriam:
Alan O. Dann, Judy Gorman,
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Breakfast

FROM SECTION FRONT

fellow local Deirdre Baker a decade later. But continuing the effort has been challenging.

Consider Baker. When the working mother began, she figured she'd give it five years. After her fourth in 2010, she wondered if her plate was too full, as she couldn't shake a stuffy nose.

Seeing a doctor, Baker discovered she had sinus cancer. To reach it, surgeons had to sacrifice her right eye in one operation that morphed into a half-dozen, followed by six weeks of daily three-hour trips for radiation.

Wearing an eye patch, Baker nevertheless oversaw her fifth breakfast. Once disease-free, she was ready to pass on the task of coordinating volunteers and contributions to Slate's daughter Judy Flynn.

Then Flynn was diagnosed with cancer.

Flynn, like Baker, was determined to beat it. But a week before Christmas 2013, Flynn died unexpectedly, leaving Baker to head efforts one more time before training the current mother-daughter duo to take over in 2014.

The two, facing such obstacles as a 2017 storm that dropped nearly a foot of snow, nonetheless have led the breakfast to new heights. In 2019, their volunteer crew served up a record 903 meals.

After a pandemic pause in 2020 and 2021, Flynn and Walker are back to celebrate the breakfast's 40th on Sunday from 8 to 11 a.m. at 32 Linden St. The event will honor Slate's wife, Arlene, who died last December at age 95.

But unlike past years, the retiring organizers aren't looking to pass on the tradition. Said Flynn: "We don't want

somebody to feel obligated—" And Walker: "—and then walk into something that's so much bigger than they initially thought."

Then again, they won't turn down an offer from a succession team that can prove its competence and commitment.

In the meantime, organizers hope to go out by serving a record 1,000 meals.

To help meet the goal, Brattleboro residents who are homebound or working the holiday can request an in-town Christmas delivery by calling or texting 802-258-0481 by Dec. 23.

"It's just such a wonderful feeling to be able to do this," Flynn said. "Some people think it's only for people who need a free breakfast."

It's not, Walker stressed: "It's for everyone."



Jadi Flynn and Megan Walker, granddaughter and great-granddaughter of the late Brattleboro Christmas Breakfast founder Charlie Slate, pose with the kitchen crew in 2016.

KEVIN O'CONNOR, VTDIGGER.ORG



KEVIN O'CONNOR, VTDIGGER.ORG

Megan Walker (left) and Jadi Flynn (right) pose at the 2018 Charlie Slate Memorial Christmas Breakfast with family matriarch Arlene Slate, who died last December at age 95.

Tri-partisan Rural Caucus begins setting legislative priorities for 2023

MONTPELIER—The Vermont House's tri-partisan Rural Caucus, formerly known as the Rural Economic Development Working Group, or REDWnG, met on Dec. 7 with more than 45 members to elect its co-chairs and clerk and begin setting priorities for the 2023 legislative session.

The caucus unanimously elected four officers to guide the work of the group as they continue to expand the priorities from 2022 and dive deeper into the challenges faced by rural communities. The four officers and their positions include: Democratic co-chair Katherine

Sims of Craftsbury, Republican co-chair Lisa Hango of Berkshire, and Independent co-chair Laura Sibilia of Dover. Rep. Monique Priestley, D-Bradford, is the caucus clerk.

According to a news release, the Rural Caucus "is seeking to build on the success of the first-ever Rural Economic Development Omnibus Bill (H.581) in the last biennium and to address the opportunities and challenges in rural Vermont. Following elections, the group dove into a facilitated discussion to share individual members' priorities for the upcoming session

to once again make a path toward collaborative efforts and joint statement."

"The rural caucus has a long history of bringing the voices and values of rural Vermonters to the Statehouse. I look forward to working with our members in the coming session to advance policies that strengthen and support Vermont's rural communities and economy," Sims said.

"Rural districts throughout Vermont are experiencing so many challenges related to capacity and need. My goal for the Caucus is to realize economic resiliency and prosperity for all Vermont towns, which may look different in each one of them. As a tri-partisan co-chair, I look forward to working collaboratively towards our common goals by building coalitions, listening to the needs of our rural communities, and developing policy

that benefit all Vermonters," said Hango.

"This is a watershed moment for rural Vermont," said Sibilia. "Broadband expansion and build-out is rapidly accelerating with rural Vermonters leading one of the largest public works projects in Vermont's history. Ensuring energy modernization and climate change adaptation reach all of our communities will require similar levels of mobilization. This caucus serves a key communications and coordination role between rural Vermont and policymakers."

Common themes among the Rural Caucus included increasing rural municipal capacity, housing in rural communities, support for emergency services and dispatch services, road maintenance, and workforce development, climate resiliency, and many other substantive ideas to consider during the 2023 session.

The Rural Caucus is a tri-partisan caucus made up of more than 50 members of the Vermont House of Representatives who share a goal of advancing policy that strengthens and supports Vermont's rural communities and economy. Over the years, the group has worked to support initiatives to expand access to affordable broadband, ensure equitable funding for Vermont's rural schools, and invest in Vermont's farm and forest economies.

The Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD), a nonpartisan organization dedicated to supporting locally defined progress of Vermont's rural communities, is providing staff support for the Rural Caucus given the multi-partisan makeup of the group. Learn more at sites.google.com/vtrural.org/redwng.

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Take advantage of expanded hours at walk-in vaccination clinics in December

BURLINGTON—If you haven't gotten your annual flu shot or updated COVID-19 booster yet, now is the time to take advantage of expanded hours at Health Department vaccination clinics — where you can walk in, with no appointment necessary.

New hours include more evenings and weekends through the end of December, making it easier for those who work or go to school to get vaccinated quickly and easily. Starting this week,

many clinics will also offer the updated (bivalent) COVID-19 vaccine newly approved for eligible children 6 months to 5 years old. Visit healthvermont.gov/MyVaccine for more details.

"Check getting vaccinated off your to-do list, and you'll have a better chance for a healthier start to the holidays and the new year." Immunization Program Manager Monica Ogelby said in a news release.

Getting vaccinated is especially important for those at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19 or the flu, including people ages 50 and older, and those with certain medical conditions. Babies and young children under 5 are also at higher risk of getting very sick from the flu, which is currently on the rise in Vermont.

Starting in January, walk-in clinics will transition to more limited hours and close by Jan. 31. Vaccines will continue to be widely available, at no cost to

the patient, by appointment at doctors' offices, pharmacies, or other locations where vaccines are offered.

Vermonters who do not have a health care provider or access to a pharmacy can reach out to their Local Health Office to be vaccinated. The Health Department will also continue to work with partners to vaccinate homebound Vermonters, English language learners, and immigrant or refugee community members.

"State-run clinics have been a critical part of our ability to support the health care system to meet high demand for vaccines during the pandemic, and we thank our EMS and other partners for all their efforts," Ogelby said. "With many Vermonters already vaccinated and fewer people historically seeking vaccines mid-season, we will be able to return to our pre-pandemic system to meet vaccination needs."

Happy New Year!

Cheers to another year of comfort

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A time of transition for AIDS Project of Southern Vermont

After 30 years with the nonprofit, Karen Peterson hands off the leadership job to Samba Diallo

By Robert F. Smith
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—On Jan. 13, Karen Peterson will step down as the executive director of Brattleboro's AIDS Project of Southern Vermont (APSV), and Samba Diallo will move into that position.

Peterson has been at APSV for 30 years, since 1993, and Diallo has most recently run the project's Harm Reduction Program.

APSV was started in 1987, one of the earliest grass roots organizations ever formed as the world began to recognize and respond to the AIDS epidemic.

In 1981, rare types of skin cancer and pneumonia, mainly found in gay men, led to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) establishing the term Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome in 1982. At that time, the syndrome was detected on five continents.

When asked why southern Vermont was so quick to respond, Peterson said, "Knowing what was happening across the country, we knew it would be coming here. It was affecting our friends and families."

Started by volunteers, APSV began getting enough funding to start hiring paid staff in 1989.

"APSV is essentially two pieces," Peterson said. "We provide direct services for people living with AIDS. Then we have a Harm Prevention program for folks at the highest risk."

The Prevention Program provides syringes and other harm reduction supplies, testing for HIV

and Hepatitis C, education programs, and substance abuse and recovery treatments and referrals. APSV also operates a small food pantry at its office at 15 Grove St. in Brattleboro for its clients.

At one time, Vermont had several organizations dealing with the AIDS epidemic. At this point there are three, with one service covering 10 counties in central and northern Vermont, and APSV serving Windham and Bennington counties.

"At this point, we have nine staff members," Peterson said. "We have two on a grant that ends in February, but we hope to get enough funding to keep them on beyond that."

Working with an average of 70 to 80 clients, the Project gets much of its funding from the CDC. They also do yearly fundraisers, including an annual drag show, which took place on Dec. 3, and a fundraising walk.

Peterson also specifically mentioned the fundraising work of Shirley Squires, a Guilford resident who has raised over \$430,000 for APSV over the past 30 years. Squires' son Ron was an openly gay state legislator who died from AIDS-associated illnesses in 1993.

In recent years, Peterson said, one factor that has been very disturbing for those working with APSV and the LGBTQ community in general, has been the level of violence directed at it, including several mass killings.

The Pride Center of Vermont in Burlington was vandalized in April, and people associated with the nonprofit have noted that they'd seen considerable increase

in hate mail.

Peterson said she was also concerned that advances in treatments for medications to suppress the virus have led many people to feel that the virus is no longer an issue.

"When we started," she said, "we were basically helping people to die. People were very sick, and often had no family or a place to turn to. At one point a person with AIDS might be taking 30 medications a day, with horrible side effects."

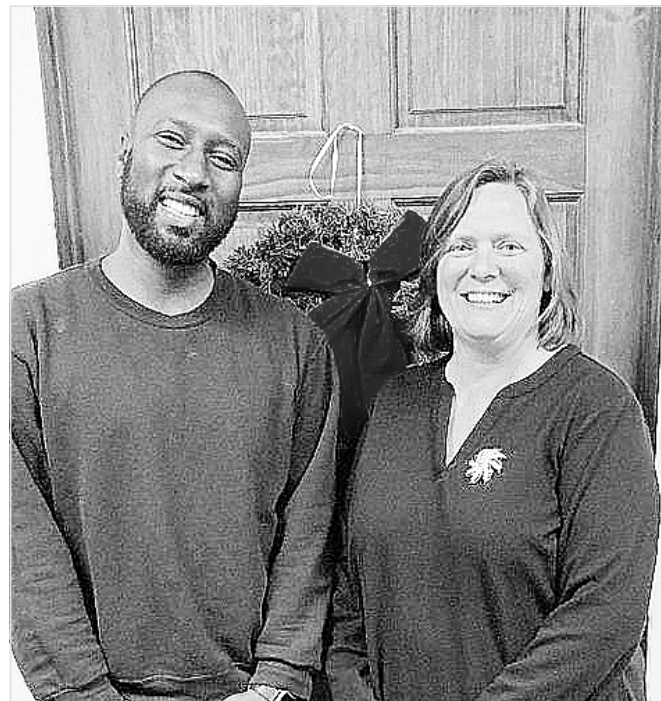
"Now, it's down to one med a day, and they've essentially

been given a new lease on life," Peterson said. "But people need to realize there is still no cure."

One positive result of the research on AIDS is that it made possible the incredibly quick development of the Covid vaccines, she said, because it was able to use the same technology.

Peterson said she is not exactly sure what the next phase of her life will be.

"It's time to have a new chapter in my life," she said. "I'm not quite sure what it is, but I have a few ideas."



ROBERT F. SMITH/THE COMMONS
Samba Diallo and Karen Peterson, respectively the incoming and outgoing executive director of the AIDS Project of Southern Vermont.

BMC rings in the New Year with two concerts on Dec. 31

BRATTLEBORO—Becky Tracy and Keith Murphy, Stefan Amidon and Zara Bode, and Peter and Mary Alice Amidon present their 21st New Year's Eve concerts on Saturday, Dec. 31, at the Brattleboro Music Center.

Two performances — at 5 and 7:30 p.m. — are scheduled for this annual holiday "Smorgasbord of Traditional Song & Dance Tunes," with an evening of New England, Appalachian, Irish, and French-Canadian dance music, fiddling from around the world, and a feast of singing.

Keith Murphy (guitar, mandolin, piano, foot percussion) and Becky Tracy (fiddle) will "heat

up the hall with fiercely intelligent and driving arrangements of dance tunes and traditional songs," states a news release. The music of these two musicians has graced stages in dance halls and theaters around the country, and even appeared on the silver screen in Ken Burns' documentary on the Roosevelts.

Both have played important roles as tradition keepers and innovators in their teaching, playing, and arranging, say organizers at the music school. Tracy and Murphy are founders and teachers of the traditional music program at the BMC.

Zara Bode and Stefan Amidon,

both of The Sweetback Sisters and The Devil Makes Three will be fresh off their sold-out Sweetback Sisters Country Christmas Singalong Spectacular tour. Amidon is described as a percussionist, multi-instrumentalist, and expressive bass singer, and Bode as "a powerful vocalist of rare versatility [...] with her gorgeous interpretations of songs old and new."

Devoted to traditional music and dance, Peter and Mary Alice Amidon are freelance musicians, dance educators, choral arrangers/leaders, and publishers of music and dance materials. Mary Alice is a member

of, and Peter is co-music director of the Guilford Community Church Choir, and of Hollowell, southeastern Vermont's hospice singing group. Their choral arrangements and compositions are sung by church and community choirs across the U.S. and U.K.

Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$5 for those ages six to 14, and for children under 5, free. Seating is limited.

Advanced tickets are encouraged and are available through the BMC website at bmcvt.org or by calling 802-257-4523. All concerts require masking and proof of vaccination or negative test for those 12 and older.

Today the biggest problem in caring for those with AIDS is no longer mainly a medical or scientific problem. The crisis is access to affordable drugs.

—BERNIE SANDERS

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Interested individuals may submit a resume with a minimum of 3 professional references to Sarah Tatro, Human Resources Manager, Town of Hinsdale, PO Box 13, 11 Main Street, Hinsdale, NH 03451. Resumes may be dropped off at the Selectmen's Office at the Town Hall. EOE. statro@hinsdalenh.org

Town of Hinsdale, NH TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

The Town of Hinsdale, NH is seeking a Town Administrator. This position will perform complex professional and management work providing daily administration of Town operations. The Town Administrator will act as the Chief Administrative Officer for the Board of Selectmen and carry out the orders and policies per the Board in accordance with all laws and Town rules, regulations, ordinances, policies and procedures. Supervises daily Town Office operations and administers the financial and purchasing policy of the Town. Salary is commensurate with experience and offers an excellent benefits package. Position will work Monday-Thursday, 40 hours per week.

Submit resume with a minimum of 3 professional references to Sarah Tatro, Human Resources Manager, Town of Hinsdale, PO Box 13, 11 Main Street, Hinsdale, NH 03451. Resumes may be dropped off at the Selectmen's Office at the Town Hall. Opportunity will remain position until filled. EOE. statro@hinsdalenh.org

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Building Community

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- Collaboratively developing and implementing a new initiative linking harm reduction, restorative practices, and low-barrier housing.
- Providing direct restorative practices-based facilitation support to individuals living with Substance Use Disorder and those impacted by the criminal legal system.

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■ Balint

In those days immediately after the election, Balint said, she vacillated between excitement and terror.

Excitement, because — well, she's the first woman Vermont has ever sent to Congress. And also because now she has the job she's wanted for a very long time.

Terror because these are dangerous and divided times in our country, not to mention in our Congress, as Republicans gained a narrow majority in the House while the Democrats gained a similarly narrow majority in the Senate.

Yet the conflicting feelings don't faze Balint, who lives in Brattleboro with her wife, attorney Elizabeth Wohl, currently of counsel to Downs Rachlin Martin, and their two children.

Previously an educator, she was first elected to the Vermont Senate in 2014. In 2016, she became Senate majority leader, and in 2021 she became the first woman and first openly gay person to serve as Senate president pro tempore.

In terms of identity politics, she carries lots of labels: she's a teacher by trade, a politician by desire, a Jew by choice, a gay woman, a wife and mother, the granddaughter of a Holocaust victim, and a child of immigrants.

It's no wonder that Balint often used the word "courage" in her stump speeches.

"If we had believed that change was impossible, I would not be standing here tonight," she told a cheering Burlington crowd after the election results were announced.

"Take note and take heart: Vermont is a place where kindness and integrity and courage matter," Balint continued. "Vermont is a place where the daughter of an immigrant dad and a working-class mom can be the first woman and the first gay person to represent Vermont in the U.S. House of Representatives."

While her primary race opponent, Lt. Gov. Molly Gray, also a Democrat, ran on a middle-of-the-road platform with endorsements from political establishment stalwarts like U.S. Sen. Patrick Leahy and former Gov. Madeleine Kunin, Balint has been progressive from the get-go.

"I give you my word tonight that I will not back down from hard fights in Washington," she said at the end of her victory speech. "I will carry your hopes and your wishes and your stories with me.

"I will stay rooted in our communities here in Vermont. And I

will work for our most vulnerable neighbors every single day [...] because we're fighting for climate action. We're fighting for universal health care. We're fighting for livable wages, for reproductive rights, for the safety of our trans and queer neighbors, for racial equity, for commonsense gun laws, for families across the state who want a better life for their kids and grandkids, and for a nation finally as good as its promise."

Balint may be the first in many things. For one thing, she's from the very first class of Emerge Vermont, the organization that trains Democratic women to run for office and boasted an 81% success rate in the 2022 election. But she certainly doesn't stand alone.

After she won the primary — which practically ensured her winning the general election — her endorsements included now-U.S. Sen.-elect Peter Welch's seat in the House of Representatives came from Welch himself, as well as from U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, whom she called "the conscience of our nation."

Sanders took her under his wing and campaigned with her. She was endorsed by U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., a host of other people in the U.S. Congress, plus many other famous Vermont politicians.

Breaking the glass ceiling

Why has it taken so long for Vermont to send a woman to Congress? (Vermont is the last state to elect a woman; even Mississippi beat us.)

Well, since Vermont has only one seat in the House and two in the Senate, and those elected to fill those seats tend to remain in office for a long time — or until another slot opens up higher up on the food chain — realistic opportunities for victory tend to not come often.

Leahy is retiring after 48 years in the U.S. Senate, and leaving as the most senior member of Congress. Welch was a representative for 15 years; now he's moving up to Leahy's seat in the upper chamber.

There weren't many women seeking political office when these guys took office, but thanks to Emerge Vermont, things have certainly changed.

One person who isn't surprised that Balint is going to D.C. is her longtime friend and advisor Liz Bankowski, of Brattleboro, who ran Kunin's successful campaign and then served as her chief of

FROM SECTION FRONT

staff.

"When Becca puts her mind on something — and never doubt that she has taken a completely studied view of any situation — she's proven that she can win," Bankowski said. "Those of us who have known her well and followed her career are not surprised by this outcome."

"She's a natural leader — more so than a lot of people in politics that I've seen, although I don't know if she even sees it in herself," she continued. "She has such an authentic and genuine quality about her. She's so deeply informed about issues, and politically she's a very smart strategist. She knows how to get things done."

Balint will now be thrust into a political world often categorized by corruption, selfishness, and a kill-or-be-killed demand for party loyalty. How will a woman who chose "kindness" as a campaign slogan fare in the current atmosphere of national politics? Bankowski is unconcerned.

"My heart sank a little when she said she was running for Congress," she said. "My first thought was, 'What words do we even use?' It seems to me to be almost a thankless thing to do in a world so brutal."

She describes that world as one of "basically open warfare. If you win, I lose. Nobody gives anybody any consideration."

"I hate to see her having to get into that kind of role," Bankowski said. "But I'm sure she carefully considered running for Congress or waiting around for the right time to run for governor and decided she wanted to be in national politics. Now I'm feeling that with her winning, and maybe if there are a few more like her, they will be a bit of a light in the darkness."

Balint is tough, Bankowski said.

"What are the deep motivations in her heart around being in the public arena?" she said. "It has to do with how meaningful the Holocaust was in her family. It has to do with growing up gay in a tough world that wasn't accepting of who she was. These things are deeply rooted in who she is."

"She will step up and fight," Bankowski said. "She will engage around basic human fairness and dignity and human rights. She will be as tough as the rest of them. I don't worry about it at all."

One person who fell under Balint's spell early is Melinda Moulton, who developed part of the Burlington waterfront and



RANDOLPH T. HOLMUT COMMONS FILE PHOTO

U.S. Rep.-elect Becca Balint, seen here speaking to her supporters in Brattleboro after winning the Democratic Primary in August, surprised many political observers by defeated Lt. Gov. Molly Gray by a wide margin.

created Main Street Landing.

"Becca Balint has always been someone who captivated my interest because she is deeply authentic and true to herself," Moulton said.

Over time she and Balint have chatted about "the state of our state" and have dug into issues like "income inequality, racial justice, women's reproductive freedom, disability rights, homelessness... and the list goes on," she said.

"As I campaigned for her, I noticed the ease at which she bonded with folks," Moulton continued. "Becca's message has always been clear and consistent, and her quick wit, indomitable strength, and brand of truth is sorely missing in our Congress today."

"Becca has a calling and a majority of Vermonters stood up in her favor and gave her the go-ahead to take her unique and authentic brand of humanism to the United States Congress," she continued. "This is her time, and she will use every second to fight for the health and welfare of our planet and her people."

'I'm just gonna be who I am'

Balint defies easy categorization. She's small, wiry, and athletic under a helmet of black bobbed hair. She's bright, quick-thinking, fast-talking, charming, funny, energetic, and earnest. She's irrepressible and serious, all at the same time.

She is so personable that her campaign staff believed that if voters could only meet her, they would flock to support her. So they designed a primary campaign around putting her in front of as many people in the state as they could.

"I think having been a teacher for so many years, it's very easy for me to be in front of a group of people," Balint said. "And so the strategy was always, from the beginning, getting me in front of as many Vermonters as possible, in small groups and large groups."

Her campaign made 535,000 calls and knocked on tens of thousands of doors. And, after the meet-and-greets and events, Balint would stay for a long time, making sure she answered everybody's questions "so they could really get a sense of who I am."

"I think people also enjoyed that I was able to laugh at myself," she said. "I heard that over and over again. I was able to make fun of my own foibles, and while I take my work seriously, I don't take myself too seriously."

"And that goes to all the goofy pictures of dogs licking my face and stupid dances that I did," Balint continued. "My team was like, 'What are you doing?' And I was like, 'I'm just gonna be who I am.'"

She easily won against Gray, 60% to 36%, according to the Secretary of State's office.

"We heard over and over again that constituents wanted somebody who had experience actually passing legislation," Balint told me. "As much as they might have

supported Molly Gray in the role of lieutenant governor, they felt like she hadn't done the work of seeing a piece of legislation from beginning to end and having to bring a caucus together."

Since Vermont makes a habit of sending Democrats to Washington, once Balint won the primary, her win was practically a certainty.

Early life

Balint was born in West Germany while her father was serving in the U.S. Army. "The closest military hospital was in Heidelberg," she said. "So I was born there."

This gave Balint dual citizenship until she turned 18. "Then I chose the U.S.," she said.

After the war, her father first tried settling back in West Germany. It was an odd choice considering that his Jewish father had been murdered by the Nazis.

"When my dad first came here with his mom, they actually didn't feel like they fit in," Balint said. "They sold everything the first time, came, tried to make a life for themselves here, felt kind of like fish out of water and went back to Germany. It was only on that second trip back when they realized, 'Oh, no. We can't make a go of it,' and came back to the U.S."

When her father left the service, the family settled in Peekskill, New York.

"He worked selling communications systems for what we used to call 'Ma Bell,'" Balint said. "That was his first job out of the army and he worked there for his whole career. When AT&T was split into all the Baby Bells, he went with New York."

The Holocaust hovered over her family.

"That trauma really colored a lot of my childhood," she said. "So if the phone rang while we were eating dinner, my dad would get very anxious about who was calling the house. Or if people stopped by unannounced. Or if he felt like we were, in his words, 'airing dirty laundry in the community' about things that are related to our family."

"He did not want information about our family to be out in the public," Balint continued. "His family had been betrayed by neighbors. And it didn't feel so farfetched that we could be back there again."

Even though her grandmother was a communist, she received reparations from the German government for her husband's death for the rest of her life. "It was money that she was grateful to have, for support," Balint said. "But I think there was ongoing trauma from the Holocaust. Not knowing who you could trust, or where you can put roots down. I think it scarred us."

"It was certainly hard for my dad," she said. "When I first ran for office, he would call me just about every month and start the conversation with, 'They hate you yet? Are you getting prank phone calls? Are your constituents supportive of your family?' He was

very, very worried. I don't think that ever goes away. It goes down through the generations."

Her mother had a number of jobs; she worked for a while at the Croton Watch Company factory repairing watches; she worked on a rescue squad; later when Balint was in high school, she did a stint with Blue Cross Blue Shield answering calls.

Balint's mother also spent time at home being a mom and running the house. Later on she went back to school and got a college degree — "and a black belt in Kung Fu," Balint once proudly told *Seven Days*.

Her mother is "a friend to the world," Balint said.

"She's the one in a mall who will help a lost kid find their parents," she said. "Or she'll take care of a sick neighbor. Her view of the world is that 'Everyone is a friend you just haven't met yet.'"

Besides teaching her to cook, Balint's parents taught her about generosity and hospitality.

"One of the most important things I learned from my parents is that music, humor, and good food will bring people together," she said.

Balint's progressive politics came out of this environment, but she was not always sure about her parents' political leanings.

"Because my grandmother was a communist, she and my dad used to get into it sometimes," she said. "And because of that, I always thought my dad was more conservative than he is."

Balint describes her parents as "people who really believed in the American dream."

"He came here as an immigrant to start a new life, and he will always be so grateful to this country for giving him a new chance," she said. "I think that when I was in my teens and 20s, it became clear that, at least socially, I was more liberal than they were. And I think that was hard for them."

Coming out

Early on, Balint's sexual identity began to cause her problems; it was a time when homosexuality was hidden; people didn't "come out."

"It was a time that was pretty, pretty lonely for me as somebody who was at that time figuring out that I was gay," she said. "So 11 years old, 12 years old, 13 years old? That was a rough time."

Balint was something of a tomboy, someone who would play ball with the guys in the neighborhood. She describes herself as athletic and "quite good at hand-eye coordination."

"But also I was called chubby, which made you feel quite insecure as a kid," she said. "And when I was in middle school, I started getting 'lezzie' written on my locker."

The abuse came from teachers as well as students.

"There was lots of homophobia," she said. "They had no qualms about saying things about 'that faggot' or 'that queer.' So you learned really early on that it was not OK to be that way."

PUBLIC NOTICES

STATE OF VERMONT

SUPERIOR COURT PROBATE DIVISION
Windham Unit Docket No.: 22-PR-06056
In re ESTATE of: John Parker Huber
late of Brattleboro, Vermont

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

To the Creditors of John Parker Huber, late of Brattleboro, Vermont.

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: December 15, 2022 c/o Costello, Valente & Gentry PC
Jennifer Irion, Executor PO Box 483
802-257-5533 Brattleboro, VT 05302

Name of Publication: The Commons
Publication Date: December 21, 2022
Name of Probate Court: Vermont Superior Court, Windham Unit, Probate Division
Address of Probate Court: 30 Putney Road, Brattleboro, VT 05301

Notice of Windham County Annual Meeting **TO ALL RESIDENTS OF WINDHAM COUNTY**

Pursuant to 24 V.S.A.133® Notice is hereby given that the Annual Windham County Meeting of the voters presenting the proposed budget for the county for the ensuing year will be held on:

Wednesday, January 25, 2023, at 4:00 PM at the Windham County Sheriff's Office 185 Old Ferry Rd Brattleboro, VT 05304.

If interested in attending this meeting via Zoom, please contact the Windham County Clerk at CountyClerk@windham-countyvt.gov. Please provide your full name and town in which you reside. The Zoom information, along with a copy of the proposed budget, will be emailed to you approximately 3 business days prior to the meeting date. Note: If you prefer to attend the meeting via phone, instead of via the web (Zoom), a dial-in number will be provided to you.

The following is a summary of the expenditures being proposed for the fiscal year Beginning February 1, 2023.

County Clerk's Office, Windham County Courthouse	\$549,559.29
Personnel	\$247,240.66
Professional Services	\$37,000.00
Contract Services	\$300.00
Building & Grounds	\$203,000.00
Operational Expenses	\$19,570.00
Insurance	\$30,448.63
Donations	\$12,000.00
Windham Probate Court	
Building Expenses	\$0.00
Contract Services	\$0.00
Operational Expenses	\$0.00
Windham County Sheriff's Department	\$403,507.99
Personnel	\$205,807.99
Professional Services	\$65,400.00
Contract Services	\$7,000.00
Building Expenses	\$1,000.00
Operational Expenses	\$77,125.00
Insurance	\$47,175.00
County Capital Reserve Fund	\$0.00
TOTAL COUNTY EXPENDITURES	\$953,067.28
REVENUE	
Windham Superior Court Small Claims and Notary Fees	\$24,000.00
TOTAL COUNTY REVENUES	\$24,000.00
County Capital Construction Fund	\$0.00
TOTAL TO BE ASSESSED TO THE TOWNS OF WINDHAM COUNTY	\$929,067.28

The tax rate is based on last year's Grand List as this year's list is not published until the end of December, January. Estimated Tax rate FY 23/24 0.01089. Actual tax rate should be known by the Annual County Meeting in January 2023. Copies of the complete proposed budget are available to the public during the county court's hours of Monday through Friday 8:00AM to 4:30PM at the county (Superior) Court on Route 30, Newfane, Vermont.

Carolyn Partridge, Assistant Judge Lamont Barnett, Assistant Judge

Life changed a bit for Balint when she discovered Rita Mae Brown's book *Rubyfruit Jungle*. It helped her to see that she was not alone.

"I knew that I was gay at 11," Balint said, but "middle school is brutal; it's kill or be killed."

"So it was really clear to me that I wasn't going to come out," she said. "I was going to have to wait. I told my high school friends right after we graduated from high school, when I knew we were on our way to college and other things. But I had my first girlfriend during the summer between my junior and senior year."

One of the first calls Balint made on Election Night was to some of her closest high school friends, who were watching the returns together.

"When I finally came out to them as gay after high school graduation, they were rock-solid supportive," she said. "They have believed in me throughout my political journey, even when I doubted myself. They have been such a constant source of strength and love. Hearing their voices over speakerphone, I was so choked up."

Balint did not come out to her parents until she turned 20.

"They were not happy," Balint said. "And if they knew beforehand, they certainly didn't say it."

"I just want to be clear that my parents are good people," she said. "They did the best that they could at that time. But there were some really hard years. They were a product of a different time."

Balint says that her parents "are very supportive of me and my family now."

To illustrate this support, she tells of what happened when, on the day after the election, she and her family went out to brunch.

"My parents were just oozing pride and love," Balint said. "I could tell how excited they were and how proud they were as other diners came over to congratulate me."

Out, and away

Balint graduated magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa from Smith College and took an M.A. in education from Harvard University. Later, she took another M.A. in history from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

"The first master's was because I knew I wanted to teach either middle school or high school, and I wanted to understand more about theories of teaching and learning," said Balint, whose first teaching job was in Londonderry. "That's my master's at Harvard. And I did go on to teach middle school for quite some time."

Then she decided to become grounded in history and took another M.A. from UMass.

"I remember my advisors asking, 'So what are you going to do with this degree?'" Balint said. "I said, 'Well, I'm going back into the classroom.'"

"Why would you do that?" they asked.

"I said, 'Well, because I feel really strongly that if I'm teaching history in middle school or high school, I really want to understand it on a deeper level.'"

"I did my research on Native American land claims, and on African American communities and women's clubs within African American communities post-Reconstruction. I loved it. I love learning."

By 1994, Balint was working as a rock climbing guide at Plymouth's Farm & Wilderness Foundation, a group of eight Vermont camps originally run by Quakers.

"I just absolutely fell in love with the Vermont landscape," Balint said. "I thought Brattleboro was such a neat area. I used to come on my days off from camp. It's such an interesting and vibrant downtown."

It was at the wilderness camp, in 2000, that Balint met and fell in love with Wohl, her future wife, who was working at one of the other camps.

"Her parents had gone to camp there," Balint said. "They met there."

And now, she said, "it's kind of fun that my daughter was there, so it's the third generation at this random group of summer camps."

The couple formed a civil union in 2004 and moved to Brattleboro in 2007. They were married in 2009, after marriage equality was legalized in Vermont.

Traditionally, Jewishness is matrilineal — passed down to the next generation from the mother's side of the family — but both Wohl and Balint have chosen the religion of their fathers.

"My Jewish history and heritage is very important to me, although I know that because it is on my dad's side of the family, I am not really considered Jewish," Balint said. "Same for my wife, who is Quaker on her mom's side, Jewish on her dad's."

"We try our best to keep Shabbat every week and we love and cherish that time of slowing down and being with each other,

connecting with our spiritual side and sitting in deep gratitude," she continued.

"We make fresh challah each week, and I find deep spirituality in the ritual of lighting the candles, singing the blessings, and reconnecting with my family," Balint said. "I have seriously considered converting at several points in my life, but have come to understand that while the history and culture of Judaism is very important to me, I'm not drawn to organized religion."

Both Balint and Wohl are guided by the Jewish concept of tikkun olam, which means "healing the world," and they continue to raise their two children in the Jewish faith even though the kids are, if nothing else, skeptical.

"My kids are proselytizing atheists," Balint said with a laugh. "We've tried to give them various spiritual homes, and they're having none of it."

"My older kid came home once from first grade or so and said, 'Mom, can you believe there are people who actually believe in God?'"

"Yeah," I said. "I can, actually. Did you say that out loud?" Because I was just so baffled by it. And then I said, "Well, why don't we keep that as an inside voice right now?"

Becoming a politician

Balint thinks she decided to be a politician when she was still in middle school, during the Iranian hostage crisis in 1979 and 1980, when she gave what she described as "the very first political speech I ever gave" at the behest of her history teacher.

"I wish I could remember why he asked me. What did I have to possibly offer? As a seventh grader?" said Balint, who described herself as a "nerd" who consumed the news via television and newspapers daily. "But I remember thinking about how policy changes lives. Decisions change lives."

Balint would watch the split screen on TV, with the transition of presidential power from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan, and then "the scene of the hostages coming home under Reagan's watch."

"So much was going on there. I wish I still had that speech. I'd love to know what I had to say about geopolitics. I can't imagine it was earth-shattering," she said.

Balint was always involved with student government.

"You're not really dealing with big policy issues," she said. "But I love the idea of being able to make policy changes that would make life easier for people."

"In high school I won a citizenship award. I won the high school competition, and then the town, and then the region. And I went on to the statewide competition. This was in New York state."

"I mention it for two reasons. One, my dad will never forgive me for having shaved my head into a mohawk days before the big competition; he's convinced that's why I lost. But the other guy was better, and I said, 'I gotta be me.'"

"And when I won the regional one, a newspaper reporter came out to ask me, 'What do you think you are going to do with your life?' I was a senior, and I said, 'I'd like to teach, and hopefully write and then become a politician some day to make life better for people.'"

"And my mom always says, 'How did you know that?'" Balint said. "And I really don't know."

Injustice was always her cause, Balint said.

"If I look back, the throughline is thinking about the injustice of my grandfather's death," Balint said. "Thinking about the injustice that I saw," she said, citing the assassination of gay liberation icon Harvey Milk, a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. "Thinking about the Civil Rights Movement. All of those things shaped me into feeling like politics could be an avenue to improve conditions." She describes Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, as "always my biggest political hero."

After she and Wohl married, Balint taught history at the Community College of Vermont, spent time at home raising her children, and finally put her political feelings front and center when she went to campaign school at Yale University.

"It's a bipartisan program, one of the few that exists," she said.

She followed that up in 2013 by becoming a member of the first class at Emerge Vermont.

"It was a wonderful experience to be with other women who cared deeply about politics and policy," she said. "That very first weekend, we were in the State House; I met some of my now dearest friends in that room. We talked about what it was that drew us to the work. And I was just in awe of the State House, being in there."

At that point, Balint said, she "really didn't think that I would run anytime soon, because the



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT COMMONS FILE PHOTO

Vermont Senate candidate Becca Balint of Brattleboro danced the night away at a campaign party in 2014 at the Brooks House after her successful primary election.

kids were so little. I just wanted to go through the process and make those connections. But why go through the training if you're not willing to put yourself out there?"

She credits Wohl for pushing her.

"She said, 'This is something that you've been interested in for a long time. And you just put it on the back burner? Don't you want you to try it? The first time out, you may not win. I would not be where I am today if it weren't for her incredible support.'"

For her first-ever campaign, Balint challenged incumbent senators Peter Galbraith of Townshend and Jeanette White of Putney for a Senate seat to represent Windham County. When Galbraith dropped out of the race, she and White won handily.

Vermont legislative accomplishments

In the Senate, Balint helped form the task force that eventually broke the impasse on the state's pension system. And when Gov. Phil Scott vetoed the task force's solution, Balint and House Speaker Jill Krowinski, D-Burlington, were able to unanimously override the veto, earning the gratitude of teachers everywhere.

She also gets credit for her work on Article 22, the first amendment in the nation protecting reproductive rights. It overwhelmingly passed into the Vermont Constitution on Election Day.

"Some of the most important work I've done is around housing investments," Balint said. "We've invested hundreds of millions of debt dollars in all kinds of housing, from rehabbing dilapidated buildings to accessory dwelling units online. And it isn't enough. It absolutely isn't enough."

"One of the things that I've learned in the last couple of years — and in working on this issue in earnest — is that rural America is really, really struggling," she continued. "We can't get out of the housing crisis if we're not investing in housing in small towns and villages. It can't just be Burlington."

"But in order to do that, you need to have water and sewer investments," Balint said. "I hear from planners across the state that they would like to be able to build more housing in their downtown village centers, but they don't have the water and sewer capacity."

She said building that capacity is "definitely something I'm interested in working on in Congress."

Balint also worked on the issue of food insecurity.

"I'm really proud of the work that we did on universal meals," she said. "We worked very hard in the last two years to make sure we could fund universal meals for kids in schools, for breakfast and for lunch, as we've seen rising levels of hunger in the state."

She also gets credit for helping to pass the first gun safety laws in Vermont's history — a change she called "one of the most important things we did."

"It was at a time when everybody said it was the third rail of Vermont politics," Balint said. "Even the governor thought you can't pass gun violence prevention laws in Vermont because of our hunting culture."

"But many of us felt there was a difference between the incredible passion that so many hunters and anglers have about the natural world that was very different from what we were hearing," she continued. "People were fed up with how easy it was to purchase a gun.

There was no background check. There was no waiting period. These are commonsense laws, and most people were shocked that they are not on the books."

Balint was on the receiving end of nasty emails and comments for her gun stance.

"It's a really interesting moment when I'm being called a Nazi and a fascist," she said. "Just think about my own family's experience with that."

"It was always an interesting mix of emotions that we couldn't even have a civil conversation about something that most Vermonters feel is common sense," Balint observed.

Balint also led passage of a paid family leave bill through the Senate, as well as a minimum wage increase and a climate bill that her website describes as "the boldest climate bill our state's ever passed."

She admits that she has also made mistakes and is likely to make more of them.

"Of course I'm going to let people down sometimes," she said. "I'm a human, and I'm going to screw up. But I'm going to do the best that I can. I don't think I have all the answers. I really don't. I should always be very, very curious about what somebody else is bringing into a meeting or a conversation."

"And I don't think that makes me a weak leader, even though I've been told it does," Balint said.

The House campaign

When Leahy announced his retirement after 48 distinguished years in the Senate, he opened the dam and a flood of politicians swept through — many of them women.

Welch wanted to move up to replace Leahy, which opened the seat in the House. Balint threw her hat in that ring.

One motivating force was the Jan. 6, 2021 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., said Balint, who was in Montpelier being sworn in as president pro tem of the Senate on the same day.

"So I went from the highest high of getting elected to this position by my peers, and having for the first time ever a woman speaker of the House [Krowinski] while there was a woman president pro tem. And just a couple of hours later we were sitting in our offices watching the news. So I went from this incredible feeling of elation to terror and a really deep concern about the democracy."

"Jill and I felt strongly that we had a responsibility to show that in Vermont we could still have functioning government, that as much as we can be frustrated with the governor for vetoing our bills and not seeing eye to eye on things, we're still going to have a functioning government," she continued.

Balint said that at that moment, she saw that "the fight of my life" — where she would need to put her energy on issues like voting rights, reproductive freedoms, and the consequences for a failed coup against the U.S. government — would be at the federal level.

At one point, the LGBTQ Victory Fund political action committee started pouring money — eventually, \$1.1 million, mostly from one person — into Balint's campaign.

In her primary battle, Gray raised the issue of dark money influence — a legitimate public policy issue. But PACs are not part of any campaign; while they may produce ads, the law forbids them from coordinating with a

candidate's campaign.

So Balint had no say in how the money was spent on her behalf, and it worried her.

"It's horrible," she said. "It's absolutely horrible."

"I was incredibly frustrated by that spending. I don't know who the man was and I never met him," Balint said. "I was holding my breath for weeks, because I didn't want this person or this organization to go negative on my opponent. That would have been a nightmare in every possible way. Not in line with my values, not in line with my campaign."

"It was an incredibly unsettling time," she continued. "People in Vermont were so angry at the number of mailers that were coming in. My own wife was upset. And I couldn't do anything about it."

That \$1.1 million came from Nishad Singh, director of engineering and a minority stockholder of the cryptocurrency exchange FTX, which has fallen into bankruptcy.

The firm's chief executive officer, Sam Bankman-Fried, has been arrested on charges of violations of securities laws. Separately, he contributed \$2,900 directly into Balint's campaign and into Welch's campaign.

Both politicians have donated that same amount to charity. PAC money — which Balint called "really unhealthy for our democracy" — especially noticeable in negative advertising during a campaign, was made possible by the U. S. Supreme Court's Citizens 2010 United decision, which gave corporations the same free speech rights as individuals.

Vermont hasn't seen much negative advertising, but neighboring states were drowning in it during the run-up to this election. Balint said she would work to overturn Citizens United.

"Short of that, I don't see how you combat that kind of spending," she said.

On to Washington

Balint is taking to D.C. a laundry list of other progressive causes to work on. Topping her list is the mental health crisis.

"I've been very focused on it for years," she said. "That is something I'm going to be really working on in earnest from from the get-go. It's clear that we have a shortage of mental health counselors and practitioners at all levels. I think we need some federal funds to help us get [new] counselors trained up."

There is "an incredibly high rate" of both anxiety and depression in young people, teens, and people in their early 20s, Balint said.

"I think the pandemic has been incredibly difficult on them," she said. "And so I think we need additional supports within schools, but also within communities."

Balint has talked to a lot of teachers about kids "being disrespected right now, and they are having a really hard time coming back from the loneliness and disconnection they felt during the pandemic," she said. "I think investing in mental health is going to be a signature issue for me."

Across the aisle

Given the narrow GOP majority that will control the House for the next two years, Balint believes her experience in the Vermont Senate has given her the tools to get along with people in a difficult and divided work environment.

There, "we try to get to know people first, before we're trying to do work with them," she said. "So in that way, I think it will be the same."

"Having grown up as a gay person gives me a different perspective on how we engage with people we disagree with," Balint observed. "You can't be afraid to talk to your neighbor because they have a Trump sign."

"When you grow up gay, knowing that so many of the people around you don't approve of you, you don't have the luxury of just writing people off. Else you'd be writing off your own family, or your own friends. And so you have to make it work somehow. You've got to find a way to get beyond that, or else you'd be very lonely indeed."

On her first D.C. trip, she learned that this may be the first time members of Congress will have a line item in their budget specifically for security for their homes, and for bulletproof glass in their offices.

"They never had to worry about that before," Balint said.

"How can you sit through a meeting like that and hear what some of the other members have experienced and not be concerned about that?" she said. "It doesn't take more than a tweet of disinformation to stir people up."

"So, I'm very concerned about how we regulate the social media going forward, how we prevent those kinds of errant tweets becoming weaponized," she said. "Security is the thing that wakes me up at night, when I worry about my family being on this journey with me."

Balint will be living in D.C. during the week; she plans to fly back each weekend to be in Brattleboro with her family.

This won't be unlike her time in the Vermont Senate. When she began, she had a room in Montpelier but came home twice a week; then she and Wohl decided that for the children, saying goodbye twice in one week was too distracting. After that, Balint only came home on weekends.

This past year, campaigning often took Balint away from home. Now she will have a regular schedule again.

"We have been trying to keep things as normal as possible for the kids," Balint said, noting that she and Wohl have been "checking in regularly with them to see what they need right now."

"And we have told them — and their teachers — that we are balancing keeping things normal and calm for them while also understanding that there may be events and gatherings that we want them to attend," she added. "I want them to have all the opportunities this affords them."

On the day after the election, the family was driving home from Burlington when they made a stop in Barre, the "Granite Capital of the World." There, they visited the Hope Cemetery, which, according to *Atlas Obscura*, "serves not only as a place to remember those who work outside the craft and are buried there, but also as a tribute to the stone cutters and artisans interred amongst the sculptures they created while they lived."

"The marble carvings there are incredible, and my son has wanted to go for a while now," Balint said. "We took an hour or so and walked around together looking at the craftsmanship and marveling at the talent of those stonemasons."

"We all love history, so it seemed like the perfect thing to do together," the lifelong teacher and representative-elect said. "It's not lost on me that my election has now also made me a part of Vermont's history. I feel the weight of that."

MILESTONES

Births, deaths, and news of people from Windham County

Transitions



• **Mona Williams** recently was elected to the board of directors at Members 1st Credit Union in Brattleboro for a three-year term. Williams is the payroll and benefits coordinator at Cota & Cota and is a member of the Brattleboro Sunrise Rotary since 2017 and served as its past president in the 2021-22 member year. She has been a USBC League Bowler at Brattleboro Bowl for more than 12 years and a current member of the Child Care Coalition in Brattleboro for the past year. In her free time, she enjoys volunteering, gardening, and camping.



• **Alice Bessie Clayton, 95**, formerly of Jamaica. Died peacefully Dec. 10, 2022 at Vernon Green Nursing Home. Alice was born on April 1, 1927 on the Wright family farm in Jamaica to John and Mary (White) Wright. She was one of 20 children. She attended South Hill School in Jamaica. Alice lived at home until she met and married the love of her life, Bill Clayton, and was married 53 years until his death in 2008. Alice was always happy being a homemaker and never worked outside the home although, when she was still living at home, she stuffed toy bears for Mary Meyer Toys. One of her favorite things was picking berries along some country road or at a local orchard, then of course, making pies and freezing the extras for later. Alice loved cooking and trying new recipes she found in a magazine. She had many books with some of her favorite recipes pasted in them. Alice enjoyed very much the simple little pleasures in life. She loved going fishing for brook trout using a branch, fishing line, and a hook (of course, someone put the worm on for her). She would just laugh because she caught more fish with that branch than her fishing companions had all day. In the summer, you would find her in the garden pulling weeds with a contented smile. Alice loved doing puzzles, knitting, and looking at magazines to cut out her next recipe. She loved dogs and always had many of her own and would dog-sit for her daughter's little dog and spoil them all. On the weekends, she loved going for a drive to visit family or going to yard sales with her daughter. In addition to her husband, Bill, she was predeceased by her 19 siblings. She leaves behind a daughter, Maxine Rice, of Hinsdale, New Hampshire. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: As per Alice's wishes, there will be no funeral services. Donations to the Windham County Humane Society, P.O. Box 397, Brattleboro, VT 05302. To share a memory or send condolences to Alice's family, please visit www.atamaniuk.com.



• **Peter Joseph Gerbasi, 56**, of Brattleboro. Died Dec. 2, 2022 at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital following a courageous battle with cancer. Peter was born in Brattleboro on Dec. 10, 1965, the son of Mary L. (Bacon) Gerbasi. He was raised and educated locally, attending Dummerston Elementary School and Brattleboro Union High School. After high school, Peter served in the Army and was stationed in Fort Hood, Texas. Peter was part of the kitchen staff at Mount Snow Ski Resort for many years. Prior to that, he worked as a general contractor in the Brattleboro area. Always wanting to help others, Peter volunteered at Turning Point in Brattleboro. He enjoyed music, playing his guitar, and singing. He loved the outdoors and time spent on his Harley Davidson as well as playing cribbage with family and friends. Peter leaves behind his mother, Mary Bacon, of Brattleboro; a son, Mike Curtis, of Brattleboro; a brother, Timothy Gerbasi, and his wife, Lorri, of Brattleboro; one nephew, Cody Gerbasi, of Wilmington; and a niece, Kalysta Gerbasi, of Charlestown, New Hampshire. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A celebration of life will be held in the springtime, to be announced. Donations to Turning Point, 39 Elm St., Brattleboro, VT 05301. To share a memory or send condolences to Peter's family, visit atamaniuk.com.

• **Mike Malekoff, 78**, of Londonderry. Died Dec. 12, 2022 at his home following a lengthy illness. Mike was born on April 12, 1944 in Paterson, New Jersey to Madeline Japko Malekoff and Jules Malekoff. He grew up in Cranford, New Jersey and raised his family in Old Bridge and Manalapan, New Jersey. Mike was an outstanding halfback on the Cranford High School football team. While in high school, he met and married the love of his life, Dale Vogel. They shared 58 loving years together. Mike had a lifelong career working for Pathmark Supermarkets. Upon retirement, he created Patriot Painting and embarked on residential house painting part-time. An avid outdoorsman, Mike was an executive member of the Fin, Fur, and Feather Rod and Gun Club in New Jersey. He enjoyed fishing trips with the guys on the

Brattleboro police to test civilian support program

The department, stretched for officers, will pay from unexpended funds in the current budget

By Kevin O'Connor
VtDigger.org

BRATTLEBORO—The police department, which has dealt with a nationwide staffing shortage by subtracting work shifts, is launching a pilot program to test something else: Adding civilians.

The force — which is budgeted for 27 officers but has only 18, just two-thirds its full complement — has unveiled plans for a proposed Brattleboro Resources Assistance Team (BRAT) to help with administrative tasks that don't require tactical training.

"The program will allow for us to continue to provide all of the services we currently provide while also allowing our sworn officers to put more focus on criminal activity such as burglaries, larcenies from vehicles, and robberies," Police Chief Norma Hardy has written in a memorandum to local leaders.

Currently facing about 900 calls a month, the short-staffed police department is prioritizing crimes against people over a rising number against property.

"A lot of our calls have been about people who want to harm others or harm themselves," Hardy told the public earlier

this fall amid complaints about downtown drug dealing and related problems.

As part of a six-month test, a BRAT staffer will greet people at the front desk, take information about non-investigatory and non-injury accidents, write reports on lost or stolen property, help with fingerprints for people needing background checks, and assist in traffic control at special events or crash scenes.

"We are hoping that this pilot program will be a positive addition," Hardy wrote in the memo. "By focusing our sworn personnel more on criminal activity, such as burglaries and larcenies from vehicles, we will potentially allow for higher clearance rates for those types of crimes."

The Selectboard, hearing of the proposal at its Dec. 13 meeting, learned it would be paid for with budgeted but unspent police money.

"We know how to do officers in a uniform with a badge and a gun," interim Town Manager Patrick Moreland told the board. "This is the chief trying to explore other ways in which to serve the community and to staff up a little differently. We think it's worth a try."

The proposal comes a year and a half after the department reduced its daily patrols from three shifts to two because of a lack of qualified applicants, although police stress they continue to field all calls and respond to all emergencies.

It also follows a 2020 municipally sponsored Community Safety Review that found one of the state's most politically progressive towns was among "the worst" for disproportionately policing people with marginalized identities — although the report called for "acknowledgement" and "accountability" rather than large-scale defunding of the understaffed department.

Shortly after the review, Brattleboro hired Hardy — an officer for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey during the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks — as Vermont's first Black female police chief.

The Selectboard has asked to receive an update on the pilot program at the end of its six-month trial.

"Given the range of challenges that the chief is trying to address," Moreland said, "it seems to us that this is an opportunity worth exploring."

Obituaries

• **Theresa A. "Terry" Bolster** of East Dummerston. Died Nov. 30, 2022 at home. Terry was an amazing woman, wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, sister, aunt, cousin, and friend to many people. Together with her husband of 60 years, Cleon Bolster Sr., they founded B's Treasures and Flea Market in Swanzey, New Hampshire. Terry spent most of her life in Vermont, creating a great home for her children and a safe, happy place to live for foster children. Terry enjoyed spending her days going to tag sales, flea markets, and thrift shops. She loved family gatherings, large and small, sharing stories of current and past milestones. Terry is survived by her husband Cleon; daughters Anita Foss, Lora Gonyea, Karen Sprague (Martin), and son Cleon Jr. (Frankie); grandchildren Rodney, Levi, Cameron, Beth, Eric, Kaden, and Krista; and great-grandchildren Connor, Caden, Colin, Mason, and Ivory. She is also survived by her brother James and sisters Lea, Barbara, and Sandy. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A celebration of her life was held Dec. 15 at the Evening Star Grange in Dummerston Center. Donations

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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.

Salmon River, pheasant hunting on Thanksgiving morning, and surf fishing during spring break in Cape Hatteras. Mike enjoyed refinishing antique furniture and could be found at flea markets and yard sales searching for treasures. An avid gardener, he lamented that growing tomatoes in Vermont was not as successful as in New Jersey, but his asparagus was outstanding. Later in life, Mike discovered skiing and fell in love with the Green Mountains. Mike and Dale visited all 50 states and traveled internationally to China, Egypt, Russia, the Caribbean, Canada, and Germany. Mike was honored to serve as a trustee of the Second Congregational Church in Londonderry, and applied his supermarket expertise to help the Londonderry Food Pantry provide groceries for local residents. Mike is survived by his wife and

daughters Kathryn Malekoff of Toms River, New Jersey, and Laura Lukaszek and her husband Larry of Millington, New Jersey and grandchildren Steven, Jessica, and Garrett Lukaszek. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A celebration of life for Michael will be announced after the new year. Donations to the Neighborhood Connection or the Second Congregational Church, both in Londonderry, in care of Brewster-Shea Funeral Home, P.O. Box 885, Manchester Center, VT 05255. To send condolences, visit sheafuneralhomes.com.



• **John E. McKay, 79**, of Vernon. Died on Dec. 11, 2022. Born on April 22, 1943, he was a humble businessman with the

best handshake and a heart of gold. John was truly a self-made man inspired by the art of the deal who loved people, life, and business. He was destined to be an entrepreneur and never lost his old school values in the modern world. At age 9, he sold his first bike and, by age 15, he sold his first car. He started his car business in West Brattleboro and ran that for more than 50 years before moving into real estate. John tried not to turn anyone away. He was one of the biggest believers in second chances. Things such as hair curlers, fishing poles, and pots and pans were accepted as a deposit on a car. He was creatively wired for making money, he never forgot the value of even a penny. He measured success by the amount of people he was able to help and that meant he never made a deal

without making a friend as well. If he shook your hand, you could be sure whatever he promised was a guarantee. His humor and kindness were always contagious traits of his. John wore many hats. He was a father, husband, friend, uncle, grandpa, business man, teacher, traveler, therapist, storyteller, problem solver...you name it. He saw the good in everyone and was always, unapologetically, himself. He leaves behind his wife Diana; children Kelly Henry, Patrick Strange, Meagan McKay, Mariah McKay, and Maggie McKay; and many more loved ones. He was predeceased by his sister Marlys Duncan, mother Marjorie Ober and father Edward Vincent McKay. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A celebration of his life will be held at the Eagles Club in Brattleboro on Thursday, Dec. 22, from 4 to 7 pm. The family welcomes any and all stories about John to be sent via email to magmckart@gmail.com. Arrangements are under the direction of Atamaniuk Funeral Home of Brattleboro.

Services



• Funeral services for **Vera M. Deyo** will be conducted on Wednesday, Dec. 28, at 1 p.m. at First Baptist Church on Town Crier Drive in Brattleboro. Mrs. Deyo, 99, died Sept. 17, 2022 at Bradley House in Brattleboro. To view her full obituary, visit atamaniuk.com.

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Hi, my name is **Bo!** I am a very sweet and friendly young man who came to WCHS after my owner could no longer care for me. It turns out that was a good thing since once I had my vet exam we realized I am heartworm positive! The staff can tell you more about the treatment and after care when you come and meet with me! Once I am healthy I would like to have lots of adventures as I'm still young and energetic. I may be able to live with another dog who doesn't mind my exuberance as long as we get a chance to know each other gradually. Cats are a bit too exciting for me so I shouldn't live with any. Children who won't be intimidated by my bouncy personality and puppy like play should be okay.

Hi, my name is **Bucky!** I am a very sweet dog who loves people and toys, emphasis on toys! Once I bond with you I'm affectionate and have a great personality. I have a good amount of energy but seem to be able to occupy myself with toys and am very happy with a round of fetch in the yard. I would do best in a home without small kids and other animals, so I could be your one and only. I am a happy go lucky boy who is down on my luck and ready to start a new chapter so come meet me soon!

Hi, my name is **Tanesi!** I am a sweet girl who once I get to know you, but I will need a lot of patience and understanding. I came from the south as a stray and not much is known about me. I love to play ball and rope toys. I may be able to live with another dog my size. I am not a fan of kids and should live in an adult only home. Cats are a little too exciting for me and I like to chase them.

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COLUMN | Memorable Meals

Side dishes that hold their own

You can make these favorites ahead of your holiday feast or pull them together in practically no time

WESPEND A LOT of time and money on the holiday main dish, but the side dishes are often the most memorable. There would be a revolt in our family if we didn't have creamy mashed potatoes and gravy or everyone's favorite cauliflower and cheese sauce.

But I like to switch things up a bit, too, and try something new every year. Sometimes, that experimentation manages to become part of our regular offerings.

I really appreciate a few dishes, like these, that you can put together in practically no time or that you can make a day or two ahead and just pull out and serve or reheat while the turkey is resting.

Sweet and Spicy Broccoli and Pea Salad
This salad is a little lighter than the one Mom used to make with a thick, gloppy dressing and tons of bacon, not that the bacon lovers in the family wouldn't want some here! (We'll let them add it if they want, but only if it is locally raised.)

- Break into small florets:
- ▶ 1 large head, or two small, of broccoli
- Peel and chop the stems as well — they are delicious! Steam for about 3 to 4 minutes, just until crisp/tender, then immediately rinse under cold water to set the vibrant color. Drain and set aside.
- In a large bowl, combine:
- ▶ 3 or 4 scallions, sliced
 - ▶ ½ cup vegan or regular mayonnaise
 - ▶ 2 to 3 Tbsp. Sriracha
 - ▶ 1 Tbsp. ginger, finely grated on microplane
 - ▶ 1 large garlic clove, finely grated on microplane
 - ▶ 1 Tbsp. Vermont maple syrup, dark
 - ▶ 2 Tbsp. cider vinegar
 - ▶ 1 tsp. sesame oil, toasted
- Whisk well, then add:
- ▶ ½ cup frozen peas, thawed
 - ▶ ½ cup Marcona almonds (save a few for garnish)
 - ▶ ½ cup ginger, chopped, crystallized (save some for garnish)
- Mix, gently toss in the broccoli, and season with salt to taste. Plate and garnish with reserved almonds and ginger.

Roasted Baby Carrots with Fresh Mint
If you can't find carrots with tops, use fresh parsley in place of the tops in the sauce.

Preheat the oven to 450F and place a rimmed baking sheet in to heat.

Scrub and remove the tops from:

- ▶ 1 small bunch baby carrots with tops

Place them on the heated sheet pan and drizzle with a little olive oil, rolling them to coat evenly. Roast until tender (generally 8 to 10 minutes, but time will vary according to the size of your carrots).

Meanwhile, in a small saucepan, combine:

- ▶ 2 Tbsp. butter or vegan butter
- ▶ 1 heaping Tbsp. mint, finely minced
- ▶ 1 heaping Tbsp. carrot tops or parsley, finely minced
- ▶ 1 heaping Tbsp. pickled ginger, minced
- ▶ 1 Tbsp. native honey
- ▶ 1 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice

Let the butter melt, then keep the mixture warm while the carrots roast.

When the carrots are done, pour the butter mixture over them and coat well. When you are ready to serve them, garnish them with a sprinkling of fresh mint.

Tangy Endive Salad
This salad is even better the next day.

In a large bowl, combine:

- ▶ 2 large heads of Belgium endive,

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." Her column has regularly appeared in The Commons' special sections for years.

- sliced or chopped
- ▶ 1 medium English cucumber, chopped
 - ▶ Handful of grapes, sliced in half
 - ▶ ¼ cup flat-leaved parsley, chopped and packed
 - ▶ ½ cup almonds or nuts of choice, roughly chopped (save a few to garnish)
- In a canning jar or other small jar, combine:
- ▶ 2 Tbsp. cider vinegar
 - ▶ 1 Tbsp. maple syrup
 - ▶ 1 Tbsp. grainy mustard
 - ▶ 1 Tbsp. capers, crushed a bit
 - ▶ 1 tsp. caper brine
 - ▶ 3 Tbsp. fruity olive oil
- Shake well to emulsify the dressing. If you want it spicy, add:



Cranberry Orange Relish is a fresh cranberry side that needs no cooking and takes just a few minutes to make. It is great to make ahead because it will keep up to a week in your refrigerator.

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Roasted Baby Carrots with Fresh Mint – This dish is quick to put together, but is always a crowd pleaser. The freshness of the mint really brightens up this humble root vegetable.

- ▶ 1 pinch red pepper flakes, crushed
- Dress the salad, mix well, correct the seasoning, and place in your serving bowl. Top with the rest of the almonds and a bit more parsley.

Cranberry Orange Relish
This relish takes hardly any time, and you can make it three or four days before your event. Just don't forget it in the back of the refrigerator.

My mom made this recipe with her meat grinder, but I use the food processor.

The cranberry adds tartness; the horseradish, a bit of a bite; and the orange, both a little sweetness and bitterness, since we are using the entire orange — peel, pith, flesh, and all. The sage adds interest; it's

one of my favorite herbs to combine with cranberries. If you want more heat, add a jalapeño.

If you can't find fresh horseradish, add a tablespoon of prepared horseradish, then taste and adjust.

- In a food processor, combine:
- ▶ 4 cups fresh cranberries
 - ▶ 1 large orange, cut up, seeded
 - ▶ ½ cup granulated organic sugar
 - ▶ 1 heaping Tbsp. fresh sage
 - ▶ 2 Tbsp. freshly grated horseradish
 - ▶ 2 tsp. Grand Marnier liquor

(optional)
Pulse until the mixture attains the consistency you want. Taste and adjust. Do you want more horseradish? A little more sage? It's up to you.



Sweet and Spicy Broccoli and Pea Salad is a little lighter and a little more flavorful than broccoli side salad your mom probably made. There's lots of texture here as well with almonds, peas, and crystallized ginger.

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OUT of the BOX

Poet and lyricist Wyn Cooper releases his first novel, 'Way Out West,' after a gestation of more than 30 years

By Virginia Ray
The Commons

HALIFAX—Writer Wyn Cooper's first novel, *Way Out West*, has plenty of thrills and chills, but none, it seems, as big as the one its publication provided the author.

"I've been lucky in my life, and readily admit it, but nothing prepared me for the thrill of having my first novel published," Cooper says.

Way Out West follows the developing relationship between two protagonists as they try to complete a sci-fi B-movie that might or might not be a cover for nuclear testing. They have to face their own troubled pasts before they can solve the riddle of the government's intentions.

"It's been a dream of mine since I was a kid in high school reading a novel — or trying to — every day," he says.

That's saying something, coming from the man whose poem, "Fun," became the heart of famed singer Sheryl Crow's 1994 hit, "All I Wanna Do."

Not to mention that he penned the first draft of *Way Out West* 32 years ago.

Cooper has written five books of poetry, most recently *Mars Poetica*. His poems and stories have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review*, *Poetry*, *Five Points*, *Slate*, and more than 100 other magazines. His work is included in 25 poetry anthologies.

Songs based on his poems and lyrics have been featured on five television shows, and he has collaborated on CDs released in 2003 and 2008.

Cooper has taught at the University of Utah, Bennington College, Marlboro College, and The Frost Place, a museum and nonprofit educational center for poetry located at poet Robert Frost's



Wyn Cooper

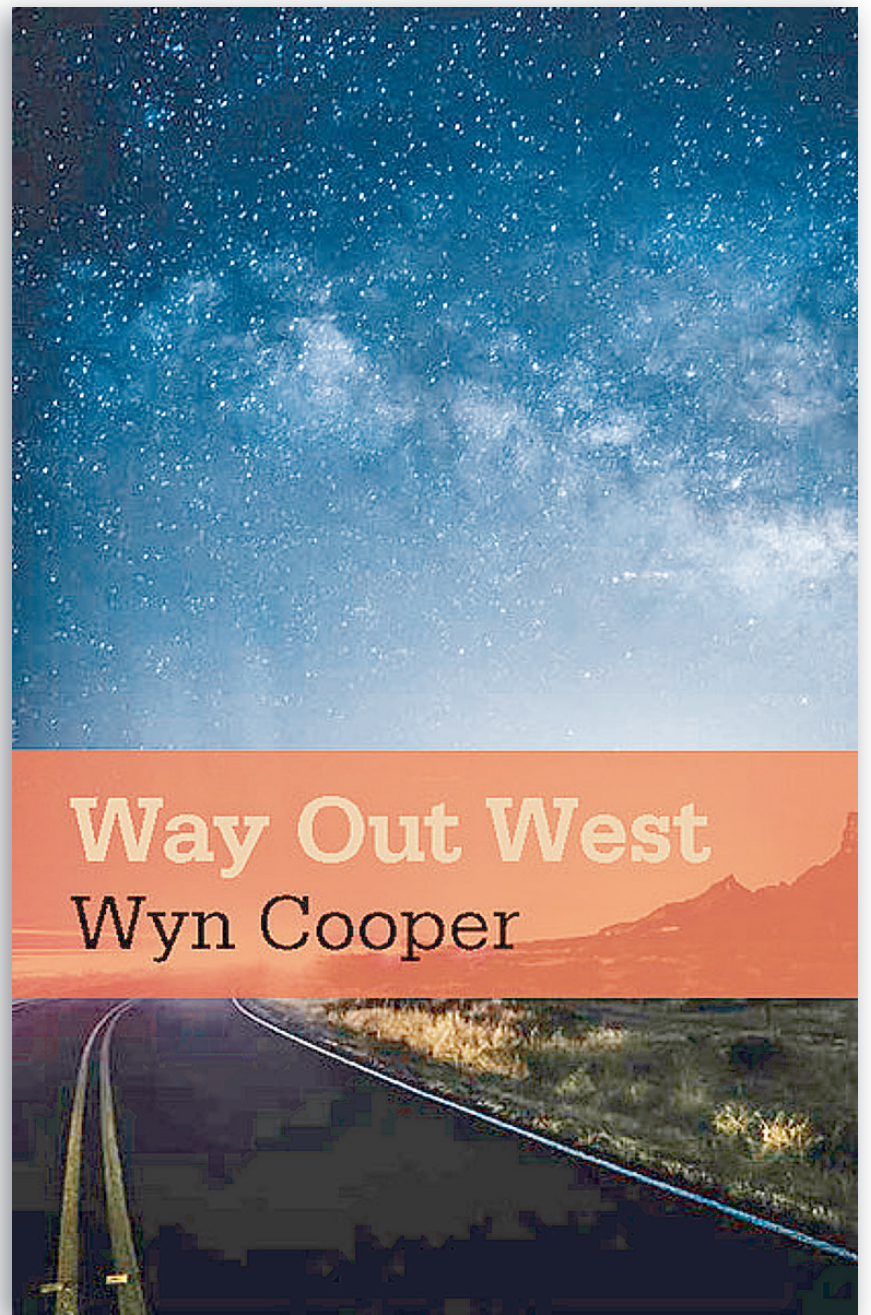
COURTESY PHOTO

former home in Franconia, New Hampshire.

The author is former editor of *Quarterly West*, a literary magazine based at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. He worked for two years at the Harriet Monroe Poetry Institute, a think tank run by The Poetry Foundation.

Cooper continues editing fiction, poetry, nonfiction, and memoir manuscripts. Not counting his own first novel, 65 of the books the affable, generous, and modest writer has edited have been published during the past 12 years.

He's a formidable downhill skier, too.



'I'll just write a novel'

It was 1987, and Cooper, who now splits his time between Halifax and Boston, had just dropped out of the University of Utah and a creative writing Ph.D. program and "needed something to do."

A classmate said he was going to write a novel — one page a day — and Cooper set out to do the same.

"I had no plot in my mind whatsoever," he told the audience at this year's Brattleboro Literary Festival of the story that takes place in three parts

from 1983 to 1984, following protagonists Robin and Tyler through the "complicated worlds of movie-making, love, drugs, and spying," as author Margot Livesey has put it.

For Cooper, the first chapter of *Way Out West* is "kind of like a poem."

It begins here, in these mountains rising out of the desert. This desert that seems endless in summer, and endlessly hot. And cold in winter, when movie crews

■ SEE COOPER, B4



'Depicting the perfect strange beauty of plants'

Madge Evers's art on view at BMAC

BRATTLEBORO—In spring 2019, artist Madge Evers saw Emily Dickinson's "Herbarium" for the first time.

Later that year, during a walk in Northampton, Massachusetts, Evers began to conceptualize a herbarium of her own.

"There, in the cracks and along the sidewalk, plants were busting out all over," Evers said in an interview with the Brattleboro Museum & Art Center (BMAC) for the museum's blog, Art Loves Company.

"Carry a Torch: *Foeniculum vulgare*" (2021) by Madge Evers.

"Tendrils of frost grape vine were raising their arms, literally waving at me. Lush greenery spoke of purpose, lives well-lived. I wanted to pay homage to their spring bursting, their summer gathering of energy, their fall retirement, and their winter waiting. I had a desire not to capture all of these stages, but to depict the perfect, strange beauty of plants."

In "The New Herbarium," currently on view at BMAC, Evers uses mushroom spores and plant matter as her artistic media. Instead of preserving and displaying the plants themselves, Evers places foraged mushrooms gill-side down on top of plants that serve as stencils.

"After the billions of spores contained in the gills or pores of the mushroom are released, they fall and mark the paper," Evers said. "Leaf and petal silhouettes

are rendered in spores with organic patterns, photographic detail, and varying textures."

The resulting images lead some viewers to mistake them initially for photographs, says a news release. They are mostly black and white with occasional color from dried flowers, like the bright orange Shirley poppies featured in one work.

"Using spores as a zero-waste art medium appeals to me as a gardener and composter," Evers said. "When I forage for materials, I engage in an interspecies relationship with fungi. Like the wind and other animals, I spread the spores of mushrooms; I germinate those powdery spores into a fruiting body that takes the form not of a toadstool, but of a two-dimensional image on paper."

■ SEE BEAUTY OF PLANTS, B4

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Three-artist show opens at Canal Street Art Gallery

BELLOWS FALLS—Canal Street Art Gallery, 23 Canal Street, presents “Life,” a collection of artworks displaying awe, coexistence, and mindfulness of life featuring artists Judy Hawkins, Carol Keiser, and MC Noyes, on view through Feb. 11.

Hawkins, based in Westminister West, paints using layers and glazes of brilliant and high contrast color which is built up, removed, and reapplied, to make landscapes which share the artist’s awe for life. She paints with the intention of learning something new from each experience during the process, paying attention to paint drips and accidental color combinations. This practice of change is approached by Hawkins as an opportunity to learn and refresh life each time she works.

“Over the last few years, I

have thought about how important it is for me to continually learn something new whenever I put brush and color on canvas; each new experience brings a new perspective and vocabulary to my work, not unlike life,” Hawkins wrote. “I am in awe of nature. It never ceases to amaze and inspire me.”

Keiser, based in Putney, paints using vivid colors and large shapes to show pleasure and delight in subjects like women at leisure, floral still lifes, interiors, and landscapes. Keiser’s new series is of life in Zambia, Africa: buffalo, elephants, giraffes, lions, leopards, and zebras, experienced by the artist in the plains and on the Zambezi river.

This series stands out from Keiser’s typical work with a color palette more representative of the animals and their

surroundings, used by the artist to approach the subjects with awe and respect.

“To watch the herds of buffalo, or elephants or giraffes or zebras move slowly across the plains, grazing, playing, protecting the young, was like watching a great dance of harmony and synchrony, of acknowledging that there is space for all of us in this universe, that coexistence is possible and real,” writes Keiser.

MC Noyes, based in Bellows Falls, paints with broad gestures and thick layers of paint to represent the movement, pattern, and light of the landscape. Noyes applies layers of paint while still wet, mixing colors on the canvas, painting over the same brushstrokes to preserve the gestures. Noyes says his new series, *Water Way*, is created from observing the movements

and patterns of water, and the use of this imagery as a meditation tool in his daily life.

“The concept of my *Water Way* series is using bubbles on the surface of flowing water as a visualization to detach the mind from intrusive thoughts and bring it back to the present. This series of paintings is a representation of this imagery. The fast current is moving away from the viewer’s perspective, up the tall vertical canvases to an unseen horizon,” MC Noyes wrote.

Canal Street Art Gallery is open Tuesday to Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information about this show or Canal Street Art Gallery, visit canalstreetartgallery.com online, call Mike by phone at 802-289-0104, or send emails to artinfo@canalstreetartgallery.com.

In-Sight offers youth artist residencies

BRATTLEBORO—For the second year, In-Sight Photography Project will run a youth artist residency.

This year, In-Sight will expand the residency and participants will join them for both winter recess (Feb. 20-24) and spring recess (April 17-21) periods.

In-Sight will provide three to five young artists (ages 15-18) the time, space, and material resources to work on an independent project of the student’s choosing.

The residency, running from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, will be largely student-motivated with staff support for problem-solving, resource finding, risk management, and skill-building.

This program is free, and provides each student with lunches and a \$200 stipend to spend on supplies and art materials specific to producing their project and displaying it for a public exhibit.

The deadline for application is Jan. 2 at 11:59 p.m.

To learn more about artist residencies, program details, and the application process, visit insightphotography.org/residency or contact Program Director Ryan Stratton at ryan@in-sight-photography.org.

Jake Swamp and The Pine plus Derek Sensale at Stage 33 Live

BELLOWS FALLS—There will be a special co-headline matinee concert with Americana Act of the Year nominee Jake Swamp and The Pine, plus Derek Sensale of Pinedrop at Stage 33 Live on Sunday, Jan. 8, at 3 p.m.

Jake Swamp and The Pine is Drew Zieff: “one guy with a beard, a guitar, a voice, foot-stomping percussion, and gumption,” says a news release. It continues, “his live shows seamlessly ebb and flow between the energy of a full band and the intimacy

of a singer-songwriter, with songs ranging from powerful acoustic anthems to knee-slapping hoe-downs to slow and somber waltzes.”

Zeiff is a New England Music Awards nominee for Americana Act of the Year and Roots Act of the Year, and a Boston Music Awards nominee for Americana Act of the Year and Vocalist of the Year. This show will be a stop on his *Simpson and Banks* album release tour, and is scheduled just a few days before his performance at the Rockwood

Music Hall in New York City.

Sensale, the driving force behind the Brattleboro-based string band Pinedrop, will play original folk songs rooted in tradition. Since 2019, he’s been keeping a relatively low profile writing and starting a family, and Stage 33 Live is honored to be part of his return to public performance.

Tickets are \$12 in advance or \$15 at the door. Seating is limited; the event will be recorded and filmed. Masks are optional, but this may change

without notice. Those experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms are asked to stay home.

Stage 33 Live is a casual and intimate industrial-rustic listening room in a former factory hosting local, regional, and national performances and presentations of original material. More info about the nonprofit, all-volunteer project, and this and other upcoming events is available at stage33live.com.

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FRI. & MON.-TH. 4 / 6:45 PM

SATURDAY 2 / 4 PM

■ Cooper

spend freezing days filming life elsewhere in the galaxy. This is the moon, they say, let’s get weightless, as they pass a bottle of gin around. Even as their vision blurs, they see these mountains clearly in the middle distance. And as they continue to drink the things around them begin to move, to sway, to lose their weight in the lunar night. Except the mountains, which remind them of everything that was ever stable in their lives, or pleasant, or real.

Cooper lived in Utah when he wrote the manuscript, but he never visited most of the other sites in the book about which he writes so lyrically.

“I lived in Utah for 12 years and I miss that landscape, and I loved it when I lived there,” the author says, adding he thinks of the landscape “almost like a character in the novel,” in part because it has such an impact on the lives of the story’s human characters.

Cooper says he had been “both fascinated and troubled” by the nuclear testing that had been taking place in Nevada for several decades and researched as he wrote.

“It seemed entirely possible that the government was withholding information about the downwind consequences of the tests and I — and most of the country — was downwind,” he says.

“I created a character who was

involved in making a film near, and eventually on, the Nevada site, so I tied the story of the making of the film into the testing and ended up with what’s been called a slow-burn thriller that’s also a love story,” Cooper continues.

Above all, he describes *Way Out West* as “a story about two people who each have myriad problems, meet by chance, are challenged by their relationship, and have to resolve that before they can attempt to figure out if the testing is somehow related to the film. And what they can do about it.”

Cooper also didn’t know much about moviemaking, he says.

“I love movies [but] I don’t know why I had the main character, Tyler, be a former stuntman whose body was falling apart,” he says. “I was a daredevil skier in Utah when I wrote the novel, competing in aerials and moguls and jumping off cliffs, so maybe that had something to do with it.”

He says he was also a fan of the 1980 film *The Stunt Man*, with Steve Railsback, Peter O’Toole, and Barbara Hershey, which involves a stunt performer crashing a film set and using his skills to save his own life.

Cooper describes the scenes in the novel that take place on movie sets in Nevada and Arizona as “purely imaginative.”

“I’ve still never been on a movie set and had never been in the places in those western states where the filming took place,” he says.

Cooper did, however, attend college with Doug Monroe, director of photography of the television program *Sister Wives*.

“When I was revising the novel last year, I sent him many questions about how camera filters might have been used in 1983 and 1984, when the novel is set,” Cooper says. “He helped me greatly.”

Asked how he was able to delve as he did into the mind of the main female character, Cooper says that “the question is flattering.”

“Robin is more like me than Tyler is, so it was easier to see what was happening in her head and heart,” he says. “She’s also based in part on a woman I was in love with at the time whose mind I had access to because we stayed in touch the old-fashioned way — letters.”

“I finished the book at Ucross, a writers’ retreat in rural Wyoming, so she and I sent letters back and forth between there and Utah,” he says. “I still have the letters and read them all again last year when I was revising the

FROM SECTION FRONT

novel. I got in touch with her, and she still has all of my letters, all these years later.”

Cooper adds that some of his favorite works of fiction are “written by men who’ve created strong, believable, and memorable women characters,” such as in Andre Dubus’s early stories from the 1980s and Jim Harrison’s 1988 novel *Dakota*.

“And I can’t even count how many times I’ve read [Henry] James’s *The Portrait of a Lady*, or Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*,” Coopersays. “As Flaubert said, ‘Madame Bovary, c’est moi.’”

Cooper also had to write dialogue for the first time, divining how the characters interrelated as he developed a plot.

As to how writing poetry versus fiction compares for him, Cooper believes both share a sense of “coming from the unconscious.”

“I loved writing fiction when I wrote the novel more than 30 years ago, in part because it was such a big project compared to a poem,” he says. “I didn’t know where the novel was going when I started it — I just created a character, then another, then put them into situations that caused them to behave in ways that let me get to know them better.”

Cooper admits that the process “sounds mysterious, as if a ghost were dictating the chapters to me and I had no control over the pen in my hand, but that’s not really so far off the mark.”

But, he says, “I’m a firm believer in the unconscious, in part because our conscious minds can get boring.”

“My poems come from my unconscious and much of the novel did, as well,” says Cooper, who had “no idea how it was going to end until I got to the end.”

“I kept hoping my unconscious would come to the rescue,” he says — “not just to rescue the characters, but to rescue me.”

In a box for 32 years

On St. Patrick’s Day 1988, Cooper finished *Way Out West*.

He sent the manuscript to a few agents and “big New York publishers,” but despite some nice rejection letters, he had no takers.

“I really, really, hate rejection and I didn’t want to keep doing that, so I just put it in a box,” he says.

Every five years or so, “I would take it out of the box and reread it and I would think, ‘I don’t know if anyone will want to publish this,’” Cooper told Festival-goers. “But I’m really proud of myself that I wrote a novel, because when

■ Beauty of plants

FROM SECTION FRONT

Evers is an educator, gardener, and visual artist. She has been paying close attention to signs of fungi since she began making spore art in 2015. Her art references photosynthesis and the ancient collaboration in mycorrhiza and sometimes includes the cyanotype process and paint.

In 2021, she was a Massachusetts Cultural Council fellowship finalist in photography. She has attended artist residencies on Cape Cod and

in Maine; current residencies at Mount Auburn Cemetery and the Kinney Renaissance Center at UMass allow Evers to interact with landscapes and their histories.

After teaching for 25 years in Rhode Island and Massachusetts public schools, she now works as a full-time artist.

“The New Herbarium” is on view at BMAC through Feb. 12, 2023.

you’re a poet, you never write anything more than a page long.”

“It’s kind of a big deal,” he said.

Despite his fear of rejection, Cooper decided last year to take the manuscript out of the box yet again. He also made some plot changes, channeling his 30-year-old self once again, as he says — and this time, however, he sent it out again.

After five months with it, Concord Free Press accepted *Way Out West* for publication. Cooper supposes the story “is one of belief in yourself and your work.”

“It’s not about perseverance, exactly, because I didn’t persevere in sending my manuscript out. I did, however, believe in the novel, and in the end that was enough,” he says. “Well, that and revision.”

Cooper is one who believes writers should have editors and so asked a few writer friends to read the final draft.

As proud as he is of his debut novel, Cooper is also clearly proud to be connected with Concord Free Press, which has also published Newfane author Castle Freeman Jr. and Gregory Maguire, author of *Wicked*, which became the renowned Broadway hit.

Concord’s ePress is part of the whole, explains Cooper, and it’s the part that funds the Free Press. Half the proceeds from sales of his \$16 book go to funding the Free Press, which gives books away, asking in return that recipients give to charities of their choosing. By doing so, Concord Free Press has raised more than \$4 million for hundreds of charities.

“It’s an experiment in altruism,” the author says.

He credits Stona Fitch, the novelist who runs the press, for coming up with his book’s title, “which is far superior to the one I had decided on after coming up with 150 candidates,” Cooper says.

Way back when

The road from poetry to music and literary fiction has been a great ride for Cooper.

Having six lines from one of his poems spun into Sheryl Crow’s pop music hit was a life-changer.

“Sheryl was recording her first record in 1993 in Pasadena and the producer didn’t like the words she had come up with for the tune that would become ‘All I Wanna Do,’ he explains.

“So they went around the corner to Cliff’s, a used bookstore,

and found a copy of my first book, *The Country of Here Below*. They bought it because many of the poems were similar in theme to the songs they’d already recorded, in that they were about the underbelly of society.

The producer had Crow sing “Fun.”

With some adaptation, the poem worked.

“They called me to get my permission, and I said ‘yes,’” says Cooper.

The experience turned out to be his ticket into the music business.

“I was able to quit my teaching job, had more time to write, and was asked by other musicians to write lyrics for them or work with them at turning my poems into songs,” he says.

“I flew to California several times to write with well known musicians, worked with Israeli folk-rock star David Broza to turn a poem into a song, and wrote, recorded, and released two CDs with novelist Madison Smartt Bell — *Forty Words for Fear* and *Postcards from the Interior*, “the latter of which is a combination of my poems and song lyrics I wrote for Madison to set music to.”

Don Dixon, co-producer of the first album by REM, produced and played on both albums.

Those songs, which Cooper says he is “most proud of,” have been featured on five television shows.

“Though I’m not a musician, becoming part of the music world has been a dream come true. Madison and I were lucky enough to have. So I guess you could say the song was my ticket into the music business.”

Way Out West is also dedicated to Bell.

These days, Cooper is skiing and working as a freelance editor for those hoping to publish their poetry, fiction, and nonfiction manuscripts.

“It’s very satisfying,” he says. “Being an English major has turned out to be a blessing.”

Will he write another novel? “I hope so ... but it’s hard,” says Cooper. “I can’t go back to my 30-year-old self and have that kind of energy and that view of the world. And that’s probably for the best.”

Way Out West is available in *Brattleboro at Everyone’s Books*, *Antidote Books*, and *BookLovers*, and in *Wilmington at Bartleby’s Books*, or from the publisher at concordpress.com.

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POEM

Dummerston

POWER OUT for three days.
We got 16 inches of snow.
Quiet settled in.
We were very fortunate to stay warm with the wood stove.
The pups napped with me on the couch.
Honor slept on top of me and my orange-colored childhood blanket that he also loves. Darling Gracie had extra biscuits while she healed a wound on her muzzle.
The well pump didn't work, so eventually the water stopped running. The dishes piled up. There was one fishy stinking cast-iron pan that ended up in a snowbank.
We drank snow water boiled on the stovetop. We made toast on the stovetop. We cooked soup on the stovetop. Thank you, wood stove.
The snowbanks became refrigerators. Thank you, snowbanks.
I read by candlelight. Thank you, candles.
I contemplated my sensitive, reactive, fierce self.
Thought about the wildcat who *meowroars* outside my bedroom window in the dawn hours. Dreamt about twin wildcats who were playing in the snow. Thank you, waking wildcats and dreams.
I visited with ceiling shadows. Thank you, shadows.
We danced by candlelight.
The memory of hitting a deer with my car a couple days ago kept resurfacing with great sadness.

PATRICIA SWEET AUSTIN, long a baker in the region, originally posted this piece on Facebook.

Anhaldamawi nolka. Forgive me, deer.
Family and friends reached out.
Thought of friends, lovers, family, and ancestors who I love and miss. Thank you, friends and family.
I cried about addiction in my and other peoples' families.
I accepted — for the moment — that I understand that I don't understand the whys of life. Calmness arrived.
I received someone else's mail package by mistake. It was a football. I went in search of the football family.
I decided if I win the lottery I will build animal crossing bridges.
We gazed at the stars.
We questioned whether it is better to stay quiet or speak.
Decided both are good.
I felt badly for existing at all.
I gave thanks for my life.

POWER IS BACK. Dishes washed. Laundry in motion. Food in the refrigerator. Still very quiet up here in this beautiful place.
I hope you are all warm enough and safe.
That's all for now.



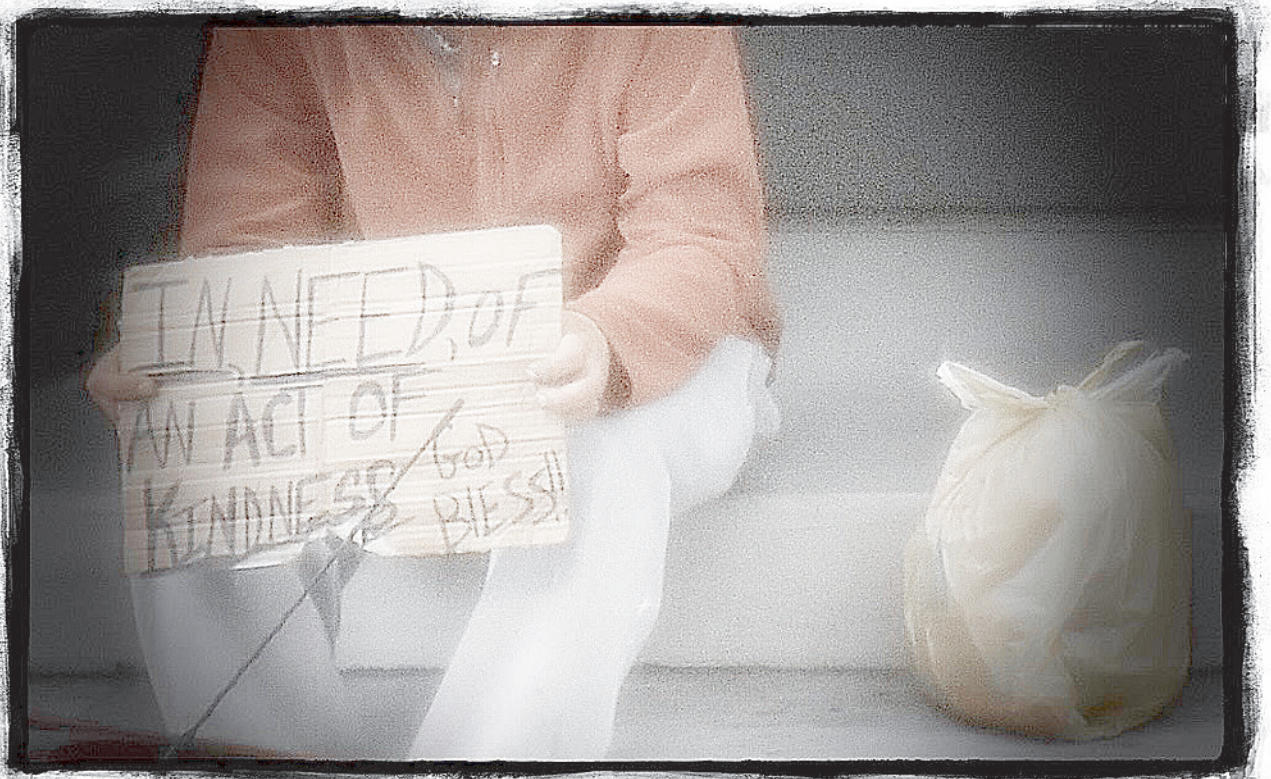
Power out

JANICE ZAZINSKI SPECIAL TO THE COMMONS

VIEWPOINT

Why I give money to people in need — without question

'Panhandling is a desperate enough act for my compassion, and I don't want anyone to be pushed to further desperation'



PHOTOILLUSTRATION BASED ON IMAGE BY RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT/COMMONS FILE PHOTO

Let's unpack this statement, which was just repeated to me for what felt like the gazillionth time today: "I don't give panhandlers money, because they're just going to buy drugs with it. I don't want to feed their addiction."
Maybe they are, maybe they're not.
But let's say for argument's sake they are actively dependent on illicit substances, struggling, and panhandling to feed a substance abuse disorder. Do you think that not giving them money will starve the disorder,

LAURA CHAPMAN is a civic volunteer, activist, and an employee for human-services nonprofits that help neighbors in need.

and that will be what forces them to stop?
Based on my years of embedded observations and experience, it won't.
Substance abuse disorder doesn't work like that. If it were that simple, the so-called "war on drugs" would have worked. Instead, we have one of the highest rates of substance abuse

disorder in the world.
Addiction of any sort is tenacious, but substance abuse disorder is downright Herculean in the stronghold it has over those that struggle with it. One way or another, it will get what it needs.
And it relies on us focusing on the outcomes, and not the root causes, to continue thriving and growing in our communities.

So WHAT HAPPENS when someone who is struggling with substance abuse disorder can't meet the demands of addiction and panhandling doesn't work?
Depending on the substance one is addicted to, I've witnessed some people get incredibly sick and desperate. It truly is a disease.
Some (not all, not even most) get so sick and desperate that they go to incredible lengths, but in the sickness they are not

steady, their decision-making abilities are compromised, their inhibitions reduced, and ability to care for themselves or others — anything but what it will take to make that pain stop — goes out the window.
This can look like selling whatever they have, including themselves, to whoever will pay, no matter how awful they are.
It can mean allowing dealers to set up in their home and take over, turning it into a trap

house — a place where they are literally entrapped, being fed a small supply to keep them compliant and often being subjected to violence when they are not. Or it can mean taking whatever they can find to sell, and sometimes that looks like breaking in and taking from you, me, our community.
And after all of that, when the disease is momentarily sated, they know what they've

■ SEE PANHANDLING, C3



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PRIMARY SOURCES

‘What a place this is’

A U.S. senator retiring from the chamber after 48 years reflects on what it takes to keep the world’s most deliberative body functioning properly: bipartisan cooperation, which once was the norm and not the exception

Washington, D.C. HERE ARE SOME THINGS we experience in life that we can never prepare for, no matter how hard we try.

Embarking on a life with the person you love is one. Having, raising and loving a child is another.

And then there’s this one. I have been here 48 years. Perhaps to the dismay of hundreds of presiding officers, I have delivered many floor statements, some more eloquent than others.

But I have never delivered a speech like this. And I so appreciate all of you indulging me.

My friends and colleagues, Marcelle and I have such warm and lasting memories of so many who have served in this chamber, now, and through many years. Including mentors, like Republican Sen. Bob Stafford, who was our state’s senior senator when I arrived here. He was the person who looked me in the eye and said to this 34-year-old freshman, “Patrick — you’re not my junior senator. From here on, you’re my Senate partner.”

In the last 48 years, the Senate has become a family to both Marcelle and me. Here we have found friends — some of our best friends — and relationships that will last a lifetime.

It’s also always been the place where I had the privilege of fighting for Vermont — the place where I was born, the place where I met Marcelle, the place where we started our family, and the place to which early in the New Year we will return together to our birthplace.

I have a reverence for this place, too, and for its history, its constitutional role, and its people, that I know we all share. I have had this sense of awe about the Senate from an early age. I used to walk to the Capitol in my time here as a law student at Georgetown, sit in the Gallery, and watch, transfixed, as the Senate debated the most pressing issues of the day. Back then, I could never have imagined that I would one day etch my name into one of these desks, let alone that I’d cast more than 17,000 votes and I’d serve with 400 Senators.

Eight times, the voters of Vermont — my neighbors, my friends, and my family — gave me the great gift of their faith in sending me here to be their voice in the United States Senate.

What propelled me to run was a belief that I understood the needs and values of Vermont and thought it was time for a new generation to address them.

After what many described as an improbable win, in a state that had never elected a Democrat or someone as young as I was, I began my time in the Senate in the aftermath of a Constitutional crisis. We faced a nation broken by the Watergate scandal, the resignation of President Nixon, and an endless war in Vietnam.

And as I leave, the nation is coping with strains and challenges of other kinds, including very real threats to the whole concept of a working democracy, the sanctity of our Constitution, our elections, and the strength of the rule of law.

Another thing that I could never have imagined as that law

PATRICK LEAHY has represented Vermont in the United States Senate since 1974. He delivered this announcement of his retirement in Montpelier on Monday, Nov. 15.



U.S. Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) gives his last speech on the Senate floor on Dec. 20.

student in the Gallery was that one day this Chamber itself, and the Capitol, would be stormed by a lawless and violent mob.

As PRESIDENT PRO TEM, I have felt that I was entrusted as one of many stewards of the time-honored norms and traditions that were passed on over the years, which help build trust, and which have helped the Senate, when possible, to work through problems to get difficult things done.

And to allow the Senate, at its best, to rise to the occasion and serve as the collective conscience of the nation. I have seen the importance of acts of grace and political self-restraint that help the Senate work.

When I arrived here, bipartisan cooperation was the norm, not the exception. It was ingrained in the fabric of what it meant to be a United States senator.

Make no mistake: The Senate of yesterday was far from perfect. I came here in 1975, when several of you were not old enough to vote. In that body, there were still Senators who had signed the Southern Manifesto and had filibustered landmark civil rights laws. I was sworn in to serve alongside 98 other men — all men, not a single woman, out of 100.

Progress would be a long way away. But the Senate I entered had one remarkably redeeming quality: The overwhelming majority of senators believed they were here to do a job, not just score political points or reduce debate oratory to bumper sticker slogans.

Issues like budgets and farm bills and transportation bills had nothing to do with whether a senator was a Republican or Democrat. It was all about the nature of our home states. We all understood that to do our jobs the right way, we had to work together.

And we did. Republican Sen. McConnell and I worked together on the Appropriations Committee, passed our gavel back and forth on the Foreign Operations subcommittee, and worked together passing complex bills.

We worked with a sense of common purpose and respect and incredible productivity.

Of course, that did not mean there weren’t times when both sides fought like cats and dogs on the Senate floor and in election campaigns.

But there were unwritten rules that applied — quite different than they are today. Senators didn’t engage in scorched-earth politics because they knew they’d return after Election Day.

I’ll share something easily forgotten today which I learned on the Agriculture Committee. I once overheard someone say in the cloakroom that they’d been driving “in the middle of nowhere.”

I thought to myself, “Well, if you’re from there, you know it’s always the middle of

somewhere.” It was the first lightning spark of a brainstorm.

For years, I’d been traveling when Senate recesses allowed to try and understand the world a little better, to build some relationships with other leaders from other countries — allies and adversaries alike. And from that very first congressional delegation (CODEL) onward, I’d found that almost without fail, when senators travel together, their partisan differences dull and their shared perspective grows. You see a country and you see each other through the other person’s eyes, just as much as you do your own.

But Dick Lugar (R-Indiana) and I came up with a new idea: a CODEL at home, to help Senators understand that rural states, whether north, south, east or west, had a lot in common; to make it clear that everywhere was somewhere and nowhere was just a place on the map that you hadn’t experienced — yet.

We explored those states together. We all got to know each other — and we all became invested in each other’s success, legislative and personal.

I fear those days are gone — but, I hope, just temporarily. Because if we don’t start working together more, if we don’t know and respect each other, the world’s greatest deliberative body will sink slowly into irrelevance — and, heaven forbid, become our own version of the House of Lords.

I AM ESPECIALLY proud of the work I’ve been able to do for Vermont, and for Americans across the nation. Among them are the Organic Standards and Labeling Act, which has made possible what is now a nearly \$60 billion industry. Also, the world’s first ban on the export of antipersonnel landmines.

Decades of work to protect our beloved Lake Champlain. Supporting our farmers and forging new markets. Revitalizing historic town centers across our state. Greatly expanding the Green Mountain National Forest by more than 140,000 acres, protecting one of Vermont’s greatest treasures.

Securing resources to rebuild after disasters from the devastation of Tropical Storm Irene to the ravager of the Covid

pandemic.

The Leahy War Victims Fund, helping innocent victims of war across the globe. The Innocence Protection Act and the Kirk Bloodsworth program to facilitate use of DNA evidence to convict the guilty and exonerate the innocent. The human rights protections of the Leahy Law. Legislation to strengthen and extend the Violence Against Women Act and the Voting Rights Act. A longtime effort to restore diplomatic relations with Cuba. And a landmark program to remediate toxic sites in Vietnam left over from the use of Agent Orange in the Vietnam War, and to care for those who were exposed.

Making our copyright laws more effective. Protecting Americans’ privacy from government overreach. Strengthening the Freedom of Information Act several times and, in several ways, to advance the public’s right to know what their government is doing. And the most significant reforms of our trademark laws in more than 50 years. These are just some of the many achievements over the years.

I have often been asked for the formula that I have used to get laws like these across the finish line. As chairman of the Appropriations Committee, it was easy: Consider the needs of all states in alphabetical order — starting with the letter “V.”

But seriously — it is by Democrats and Republicans working together.

IT FEELS LIKE YESTERDAY that I walked into my first meeting with the person who would become my first majority leader — “Iron Mike” Mansfield. The majority leader put a fundamental question to every new senator to answer for themselves: “Why do you want to be here? For the title? Or to make a difference to make lives better?”

And though he was a soft-spoken man who listened more than he spoke and rarely gave speeches on the Senate floor, Leader Mansfield dispensed one piece of advice that made as enduring an impression. “Senators should always keep their word,” he said.

It struck me that across all those weighty debates, navigating the complicated and contradictory politics of a Senate and a caucus that included everything from social conservatives and segregationists to civil rights icons and prairie populists, Mansfield succeeded because he understood the currency of the institution was actually trust, not ideology. “Senators should always keep their word.”

It was a simple formula, but it worked.

If you knew what commitments colleagues had made to each other, you could count the votes. If you could count the votes, you could set the agenda. If you could set the agenda, you could set the schedule. If you could set the schedule, you could pass legislation and still send the senators home to be present in their states when it counted.

And if 100 senators were invested in keeping their word to one another — then together

we could keep our word to the institution and to the Constitution.

I WILL LEAVE HERE with the satisfaction of knowing that I answered Leader Mansfield’s question the best way I could, in keeping with my conscience, and that I did what I could to make a difference.

And I will leave here knowing above all, that right or wrong, difficult or easy, I always kept my word — to Vermont, and to each of you.

I want to thank my current staff, and my staff throughout the years, who have steadfastly stood by me and our shared goals to deliver for Vermonters, for Vermont, and for our country.

And I want to thank my family. Our children, their spouses, and our grandchildren. My parents, who were here with me to start this journey in my first Senate election, and who I know watch over the entire Leahy family today, as do Marcelle’s. What a gift to have had a mother and father who passed down to their children and grandchildren not privilege but a powerful example.

And, of course, Marcelle. I was 19 and she was 17 when we met. I took one look at her, and I knew who I wanted to go on every journey together. Sixty-three years later, we are still on that journey, and she is still my closest friend, my partner, and my anchor.

I am uniquely blessed to have served with fellow Vermonters who share my deep love of and commitment to Vermont: Sen. Bob Stafford, Sen. Jim Jeffords, Sen. Bernie Sanders, Rep. Peter Smith and — of course — Rep. and now Sen.-elect Peter Welch. I could not be more gratified that he will be carrying on after me.

You’re going to like and respect the new fellow senator, I promise. Our collective efforts are why, in so many ways, Vermont continues to set an example for the rest of the nation to follow.

MARCELLE AND I will leave with the same conviction that brought us to Washington in the first place — that the brighter horizons of tomorrow hold the hope of the future.

I leave still carrying that same sense of reverence about this place that I felt as a law student. I have had, and still have, so many pinch-me moments. One of the last ones will be etching my name inside my desk. I will forever carry with me the enduring bond with my fellow Vermonters, whose commonsense and goodness are what I have tried to match as their representative.

“What a place this is.” I wrote those words in the margin of my legal pad as I rode back to our house late one evening after a full Senate session last year when we worked out Covid relief for people who were hurting.

What a place this is, still. Oh, what this 82-year-old president pro tempore of the United States Senate would love to say to the 33-year-old version of myself nervously walking for the first time onto the Senate floor.

“Don’t lose that sense of awe, kidd!” I’d say. “Hold onto it. Treasure it. Don’t even for a minute forget what a privilege and a responsibility it is to serve here.”

I never have forgotten. Sometimes when I drive past the Jefferson Memorial and I look at Jefferson in his marble rotunda, I’m reminded of the tension that was and is America: imperfect people struggling to make reality out of ideals that they fail themselves to meet but who always — always — keep on trying.

I think of my father, the self-taught historian. He loved to share with me the twists and turns of times gone by, not to lift up heroes as idols or point out their feet of clay, but to find meaning and purpose in the journey.

Only first-generation immigrants like my mother, whose parents had left homes where such journeys of change and redemption were not possible, could have such a gleeful

appreciation for the fact that America wasn’t a place but an idea — an idea of unmatched possibilities, ever in search of its own perfection, for new and next generations to write.

I have so loved the privilege of being even a small part of this story — America’s story.

AND I HAVE loved the privilege of working with giants and heroes here.

I think of John Glenn and the Senate he represented. I wonder what he would think of how we carried the baton he passed to the next generation. But then my mind flashes back to John’s interment at Arlington National Cemetery. In the chapel, the Marine bugler played “Taps,” paused, and then, completing a request John himself had made but long kept as a surprise, burst into Revell.

That was John Glenn: There would be a time to mourn and remember what was lost, but there would always be another mission — another call to serve — another day.

And that’s how it has to be. For all of us.

YES, THE Senate is broken in too many places. No, our institutions are not what Mike Mansfield and Hugh Scott and Gerry Ford and Hubert Humphrey and Ted Kennedy and John Stennis and Barry Goldwater knew them to be.

Some of that change is good, a lot of it is tragic, and all of it simply is what it is: You can point fingers, or you can point the way forward to something better.

That’s America, again, isn’t it?

I don’t leave here today with a requiem for the Senate. I leave here with a recipe for its renewal. Not taps, but reveille. Always reaching, always repairing, never retreating, never retiring from the journey.

America doesn’t stop. The Senate just keeps turning. And — if we’re lucky — all of us get a chance to help tilt the trajectory toward progress.

It doesn’t have to be that hard — just remember what Leader Mansfield said.

Keep your word.

THIRTY YEARS AGO, I visited a refugee camp. I brought my camera, as I do everywhere, so that I could show people back in Washington the human toll of an issue.

Always on visits like this, I’d ask if it was OK to take someone’s picture; to be a displaced person is to have endured enough without having someone invade your privacy.

On this trip, a man encouraged me to take his picture. I looked at his worn and weary face through the range finder. We sat and talked afterward, and he said simply: “Don’t forget people like me.” The black-and-white photo has hung above my desk for 30 years since; every day I come to work, he’s looking at me, saying “you don’t know my name, you don’t speak my language, there’s nothing I can do to help you — but what are you doing for people like me?”

CONSCIENCE — that’s what people are hungry for governments to stand for again. Now, I’m taking my “conscience photo” home with me, but I know that man’s eyes will keep watching all of us, and all of you. What a journey. What an abiding hope that someday after I’ve gone, the Senate in both parties will come back together to be the conscience of the Nation.

Together, you can build a Senate defined not by soundbites but one strengthened when women and men with a sense of history insist that our republic move forward. For the sake of all those children and their children, and all children and all Americans, it not only can be done, it has to be done. Representing Vermonters has been the greatest honor. I am humbled, and always will be, by their support, and I am confident in what the future holds.

But that will be up to all of you. Thank you.

Love thy neighbor... thy immigrant neighbor... thy black neighbor... thy atheist neighbor... thy religious neighbor... thy depressed neighbor... thy asian neighbor... thy lgbtqia neighbor... thy disabled neighbor... thy indigenous neighbor... thy conservative neighbor... thy elderly neighbor... thy homeless neighbor... thy latino neighbor... thy addicted neighbor... thy progressive neighbor... thy incarcerated neighbor... thy _____ neighbor

groundworks COLLABORATIVE groundworksvt.org adapted from ©TheHappyGivers.com

VIEWPOINT

Split second

'Make sure all your alarms are up to date, with fresh and charged batteries at all times. It could be the difference between life and death.'

I WOKE UP overwhelmed with gratitude to be alive and well with my family by my side.

The night before, I was awakened at 1:30 a.m. to my smoke/carbon monoxide alarms loudly sounding and telling us to evacuate the house immediately.

We had this happen one other time, and it was just a battery issue. But this time seemed a little different, and something was telling me to not just unplug the alarms as I did before. I decided to call 911 instead — just to be abundantly cautious.

The kids and I wrapped up in blankets and went onto the porch. Well, thank goodness I did call.

Nine minutes later, the fire department and ambulance got there. Before the guys were even through the front door, their meters for measuring carbon monoxide were flashing red.

They looked scared, which made me scared, too.

They ran to their trucks and suited up with protective gear and gas masks.

That's when shit got real.

Putney

ANNE-MARIE MUSCARI is a wedding photographer whose work can be seen at anne-mariephotography.com.

THE FURNACE exhaust pipe was not put back into its place the last time someone came to look at it, so all the exhaust fumes were coming into the house.

The carbon monoxide levels in the house were at 350 parts per million (ppm). That is 300 ppm higher than what is considered unhealthy for humans.

One firefighter told me that I should be very thankful I called 911. If I had not, the kids and I would not have awakened this morning.

That thought just keeps running through my head — I'm shuddering.

The kids and I sat in the ambulance for a while and we were all tested. Elayna and I have light carbon monoxide poisoning symptoms, but we will be OK. Dominick, who was the closest to the

leak, is completely fine, somehow — which I am so grateful for.

We ended up having to leave the house and couldn't go back until the heating unit was fixed and cleared for safety.

THIS WAS ONE of the scariest nights of my life. To think that my children and I could have been taken from this earth if I had just pulled the batteries out.

Or if I had just not woken up.

Or if something went differently for any reason.

I'm just so grateful to be alive. I'm also so grateful for the Putney Fire Department, the EMTs, the Westminster Fire Department, the 911 workers, and my Mom for taking us all in at 3 a.m.

Make sure all your alarms are up to date, with fresh and charged batteries at all times. It could be the difference between life and death.

And hug your kids tight.

You really never know what could happen in a split second.

Panhandling

FROM SECTION FRONT

done to get there and they so often hate themselves more for it — so they medicate more, deepening the cycle and making it harder to get out.

PANHANDLING is a desperate enough act for my compassion, and I don't want anyone to be pushed to further desperation. That's why I give money without question.

I give because I hope that if they are using it will hurt less to use in a supported way than whatever they would otherwise do to have fed that need. Because they are suffering, they

deserve connection and support, I care that they stay alive and hope that they may find a way to live without the torment of substance abuse disorder someday.

The data indicates over and over that the most successful outcomes are almost always rooted in harm-reduction approaches and not from casting judgments or withholding aid.

Please consider this before you decide that you're not going to give support to someone who is sick. Until we as a society can do better, we as individuals must.

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BRENDAN EMMETT QUIGLEY THE COMMONS CROSSWORD 'We Own This City'. Across: 1. Slump stretches, 8. Increase, as energy, 13. Light switches, e.g., 20. Arctic deer, 21. Final authority, 22. Cry from a crash survivor, 23. Norse mariner Leif, 24. Nobody from a French school? (Germany), 26. Lose in a video game, 27. Muscular thug, 29. Writer Rand, 30. Boom sticks, 31. Redhead from Arendelle, 33. Fancy lens maker, 34. One swatted with a swatter, 36. Savory Indian pastry, 39. Groundbreaking beans and pasta dish? (Peru), 43. Inappropriate behavior, 44. Very, to Verdi, 45. In the style of, in kitchens, 46. See 79-Across, 48. Scooter brand, 50. Bugs from heaven? (Ecuador), 57. Buddhist's path, 58. Org. that scans laptops, 60. Souls and Sorentos, 61. Ballpark figures?, 62. Head-injury letters, 63. See 3-Down, 65. Moroccan capital, 67. Individuals, 68. Dull soreness, 69. Illustrate some arithmetic? (India), 71. Come in last in the giant slalom? (Norway), 73. Small practices, 74. Uber rival, 75. Lawn sign word, 76. Like stuffed animals, 77. '___ seeing things?', 78. Spitting sound, 79. With 46-Across, grab hold of, 80. Get in the soup?, 82. Ottoman ruler, 83. Dye shooter? (Algeria), 87. Beatles producer Martin, 89. Actress Gilpin, 90. Japanese waistband, 91. Gold measure, 93. 'Planet ___' (1995 Radiohead single), 96. Eco-activist who maintains the highest place where trees grow? (Germany), 103. 2017 figure skating biopic, 105. Metroid console, 106. Noblemen, 107. 'Sweet!', 108. Vietnamese noodle soup, 109. The Storting's nat., 111. She helped Jason find the Golden Fleece, 112. Wu-Tang Clan rapper, 113. Flimsy tablet? (Australia), 118. Covered in sugar, 122. Bad guys, 123. Chill-inducing, 124. 'Let's talk over Outlook', 125. Beach south of Santa Monica, 126. What's happening on Twitter, 127. Iditarod competitor, Down: 1. Major mop brand, 2. Milled wheat dish, 3. With 63-Across, 'Who goes there?', 4. Cartoonist Browne, 5. Six-pack components, 6. ___-hoo, 7. Southern US region, 8. Per se, 9. Chinese spirit, 10. Combustible heap, 11. Port on a laptop, 12. Nanki-___ of 'The Mikado', 13. Really small, 14. Prophetic signs, 15. Guy's date, 16. Mop & ___, 17. Boxer downed by a phantom punch in 1965 'Still and all ...', 18. Some mattresses, 19. Dasani competitor, 28. 'imagine. change.' sloganeer, 32. Intentions, 33. Soccer analyst Alexi, 34. Oscar bait, 35. [crying emoji] alternative, 37. They're against it, 38. Strictly academic, 40. Whirlybird, 41. ___ their feet (assign responsibility), 42. Flirt, 47. Completely crackers, 48. Opera genre that means 'true', 49. Baby formula brand, 51. 'Sure, however ...', 52. Actor Hemsworth, 53. Blue hedgehog, 54. Block, 55. Cultural values, 56. Get the reason, 57. Signs from above?, 59. Military division, 64. Some NFL linemen, 66. Equally in shape, 67. Vermont resort, 68. Soundless communication: Abbr., 70. Rite place at the rite time, 71. Narrow opening, 72. Field of vision?, 75. Actress Fisher of 'Castle Rock' and 'Barry', 78. University head, slangily, 79. Harmon's 'NCIS' role, 81. Saint of a Keats poem, 84. Available on the schedule, 85. Fleshy fruit, 86. France's longest river, 88. Gravitare (toward), 92. Not tied, as sneaks, 93. PMRC founder Gore, 94. Gas in fuel, 95. Repeated again and again, 97. Calvary inscription, 98. Land, 99. Served, as stew, 100. Macho, 101. Rash problem, 102. 'Look at this here hand', 104. Chipped in, 110. 'Very very', 111. Gooley ground, 114. Whiny punk genre, 115. 'Oysters ___ Season', 116. After-tax amount, 117. Through, 119. Latin I word, 120. Henpeck, 121. Morse minimum. ©2022

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COLUMN | Sports Roundup

Defense has been a big reason why the Leland & Gray girls' basketball team is off to a good start, as demonstrated by guard Mary Sanderson (3) and forward Hannah Greenwood (23) against Arlington's Lily Hosley during the season opening game on Dec. 9 in Townshend.



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT, THE COMMONS

Rebel girls win GM Holiday Tournament

The Leland & Gray girls' basketball team wasn't able to win its own tournament to start the season, but the Rebels made a big splash in the Green Mountain Holiday Tournament last week in Chester.

Mary Sanderson scored the winning basket with two seconds to play to give the Rebels a 32-30 win over the host team, the Green Mountain Chieftains, in the championship game of the tournament on Dec. 15. The Rebels are off to a good start to the season with a 4-1 record.

Sanderson and Maggie Parker scored eight and 11 points, respectively, to lead the Rebels. This dynamic duo were also the Rebels' top scorers in the tourney's opening round game on Dec. 13 as Parker scored 23 and Sanderson chipped in eight points in a 43-34 win over Long Trail School.

Eighth-grader Callie Spaulding led the Chieftains with 14 points and Colie Roby added six points in the loss to the Rebels.

Boys' basketball

• Twin Valley had a rough time of it in the boys' side of the GM Holiday Tournament. Owen Traynor scored 41 points as Mount St. Joseph blitzed the Wildcats, 79-21, on Dec. 13.

• Bellows Falls fared better in their opening round game in the GM tourney on Dec. 13 with a 58-39 victory over Green Mountain. The Terriers rallied from a 17-8 deficit in the second quarter to eventually take the lead and dominate the second half. Colby Dearborn led BF with 22 points, while Caleb Merrill led the Chieftains with 13 points.

BF then faced Mount St. Joseph in the GM tourney's championship game on Dec. 15, and the Mounties used a strong second half effort to put away the Terriers, 55-37.

Owen Traynor led MSJ with 25 points, while Walker James and Eli Allbee led Bellows Falls with eight points apiece.

• In the consolation game on Dec. 15, Green Mountain held off Twin Valley, 45-39. Twin Valley started off hot and scored 18 points in the opening quarter. But the Chieftains picked up steam and tied the game by the start of the fourth quarter and outworked the



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

Wildcats for the victory.

Eben Mosher led Green Mountain with 21 points and Tanner Swisher added another 12 points. Noah Dornburgh led Twin Valley with 17 points.

• Cam Frost put on a show for the Brattleboro fans as he scored 24 points to lead the Colonels to a 67-56 win over the St. Johnsbury Hilltoppers in the home opener on Dec. 13 at the BUHS gym.

Center Paul McGillion finished with 10 points and 15 rebounds and Tate Chamberlin contributed with 13 points. The Colonels needed big games from their top three scorers to counter the game-high 26 points scored by St. Johnsbury's Harry Geng.

Together with a 63-58 road win over the Windsor Yellowjackets on Dec. 15, the Colonels are off to a 2-0 start.

• Parker Jennings scored a game-high 18 points as visiting Leland & Gray defeated the West Rutland Golden Horde, 54-45, on Dec. 13. The Rebels opened up a 41-12 lead at the half before the Horde made the game competitive with a stronger second half effort.

Girls basketball

• The Windsor Yellowjackets overpowered the Bellows Falls Terriers, 89-30, on Dec. 15 in Westminster. Sydney Perry had 15 points and 10 assists, Sophia Rockwood scored 23 points and Audrey Rupp had 13 points, eight assists, seven steals, and six rebounds as Windsor controlled the game all the way. Tela Harty and Laura Kamel each scored eight points for the Terriers (0-2), while Nola Sciacca added six points.

In the Terriers' season opener on Dec. 12 in Westminster, the Springfield Cosmos came away with a 40-22 victory and put coach Pete Peck into an

exclusive club. Peck became only the fourth coach in the school's long history to win 100 games, joining legends Bo Birsky, Richie Wyman, and Mike Hatt.

Sophomore point guard Macie Stagner led the Cosmos with a game-high 22 points, including 12 in the third quarter that keyed an 18-5 Springfield run that broke open what was a close game to that point. Aliya Farmer led BF with five points, while Harty, Kamel, Izzy Stoodley, and Hannah Terry each added three points.

• Both of Brattleboro's scheduled games last week got postponed. The Colonel girls will be back in action on Dec. 23 against Fair Haven at the BUHS gym.

Ice hockey

• The Brattleboro boys won their home opener on Dec. 14 with a 3-0 victory over the Woodstock Wasps. Carter Mialkowski, Evan Wright, and Alex Dick were the Colonels' goal scorers. Rowan Lonergan tallied a pair of assists, and Will Miskovich and Dylan Sparks were also credited with one assist each as goalie Darek Harvey picked up the shutout victory for the 1-1 Colonels.

Give the gift of hunting and fishing in Vermont

• If you are looking for a last-minute gift, the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department has a solution: a gift certificate for hunting and fishing licenses.

"It's a perfect gift for a friend or family member who hunts or fishes," Fish & Wildlife Commissioner Christopher Herrick said in a news release. "You can go to our website (vtfishandwildlife.com/licenses-and-lotteries/license-center), fill out the gift certificate, pay for it online, and then print the certificate to present to your recipient."

The gift certificate can be found via a link in the license section of the Vermont Fish & Wildlife website. The recipient of the certificate must go to the website to redeem their certificate and purchase their licenses.

"If you have a friend or relative who hunts or fishes, this is an easy gift-giving solution," said Herrick. "The gift certificate can cover licenses for 2023,

or for future years."

Rec. Dept. hosts Ice Skating 'FUN'damentals program

• The Brattleboro Recreation & Parks Department says that the Nelson Withington Skating Facility still has room available in its Ice Skating "FUN'damentals program for those 3- to 30-years-old. Stacey Chickering, Suzanne McCaughtry, and Megan Pratt will be offering two sessions of ice-skating fundamentals.

Session two will run on Jan. 3, 10, 17, 24, and 31 and Feb. 7 from 5 to 6 p.m. at Withington Rink. The fee is \$113 for Brattleboro residents and \$128 for non-residents.

This session requires a minimum of 15 skaters to run. This hour-long class includes lessons and practice time. Skate rentals are available for \$3 per night, but are not included in the lesson fee. Register online at register1.vermontsystems.com/wbws/vtbrattleboro.wsc/splash.html, or stop by the Gibson-Aiken Center at 207 Main St. Monday-Friday from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4:30 p.m.

Circus classes provide fitness and wellness benefits

• Get fit and have fun with circus classes at the New England Center for Circus Arts (NECCA), with a new fitness routine that you may actually want to do in 2023.

No experience needed, as NECCA is a welcoming and inclusive circus school with innovative teachers known for providing training that is catered to the individual. Weekly circus classes at NECCA begin Jan. 4 with more than two dozen beginner-friendly classes, including an online novice stretching class, low tight wire, tots and youth classes, and weekly juggle jams.

NECCA says many of its students begin in their 50s and 60s (with several in their 70s) and the combination of stretching and strengthening helps with balance and muscle tone for bodies of all ages. There are also more athletic classes for adults including trampoline (great cross training for acrobatic skiers), partner acrobatics, German wheel and pole, plus a

wide variety of youth and teen specific classes for all levels. For more information, call 802-254-9780 or visit CircusSchool.org.

NECCA's trapezium is located just 1 mile north of downtown Brattleboro at 10 Town Crier Drive, and is served by local buses as well as middle school and high school bus routes.

Senior bowling roundup

• Week 16 of the fall/winter season of the Brattleboro Senior Bowling League on Dec. 15 saw first place Keglers 4 (49-31) have a 1-4 week and second place Good Times (47-33) have a 5-0 week to cut the Keglers lead to two games with two weeks left in the season.

The Strikers (42.5-37.5) are in third, followed by Trash-O-Matic (41.5-38.5), Lucky 7 (36.5-43.5), Old Farts (36-44), Split Happens (36.5-44.5), and Slow Movers (32-48).

Diane Cooke had the women's high handicap series (231), while Carol Gloski had the high handicap series (661). Chuck Adams had the men's high handicap game (259), while Duane Schillemat had the high handicap series (684). Trash-O-Matic had the high team handicap game (880) and series (2,483).

In scratch scoring, Robert Rigby led the men with a 645 series that featured games of 234 and 224. Chuck Adams had a 625 series with games of 259 and 214, while Warren Corriveau Sr. had a 618 series with games of 222, 199, and 195.

Schillemat had a 564 series that featured games of 207 and 194 and Marty Adams had a 503 series. Other notable games included Wayne Randall (212), Skip Shine (190), and John Walker (186).

Gloski had the women's high scratch series (518) with games of 177, 172, and 169.

Holiday cheer to one and all

• This is the last sports roundup for 2022, as *The Commons* takes its annual holiday break next week. We'll be back on Jan. 4 with the first issue of 2023. Thank you to everyone who has helped to make this page of the paper so much fun to do every week, and may the coming year be a good one for us all.



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At The Commons we believe that independent journalism is critical to the functioning of democracy and is the lifeblood of our community. Thanks to your generous financial support, *The Commons* has been serving Windham County and the surrounding area for over 15 years and we're looking forward to the next 15, but we can't get there without you.

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