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VEGGIES and CREEMEEES help keep a family farm going



Two Academy School kindergarteners enjoy some organic ice cream during a June 7 field trip to Lilac Ridge Farm in West Brattleboro.

With higher production costs outpacing dairy farming revenue, farms have to get creative to survive

By Randolph T. Holhut
The Commons

WEST BRATTLEBORO—On a cool and overcast June morning, Amanda Thurber led three successive groups of kindergarteners from Academy School on a tour of the dairy operation at Lilac Ridge Farm on Ames Hill Road.

She guided the children around the organic farm she runs with her husband, Ross, and she took them through the whole milk production process, from cow to glass.

At the end of the tour, she gave them all a sample of organic soft-serve ice cream from the farm's new creemee stand.

"They always have a good time," Amanda said after the last bus pulled away. "The kids are so happy to be around farmers."

Aside from the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, when the schools were shut down, Academy kindergarteners have been coming out to Lilac Ridge Farm twice a year for the past 14 years.

The trips "help connect the kids with the food they eat," she said, adding that the June trip always



A calf peers out from her stall at Lilac Ridge Farm in West Brattleboro.

■ SEE DAIRY DIVERSIFICATION, A6

Brattleboro will hire private security for downtown

Selectboard initiates program for parking garage and other municipal properties

By Virginia Ray
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—Private security guards will soon be patrolling the Transportation Center, Brooks Memorial Library, the Gibson-Aiken Center, and the Municipal Center following a unanimous June 6 Selectboard vote to hire the outside help.

First proposed several weeks ago, the proposal to augment the local police presence came after a carjacking at knife-point in the parking garage and residents

raised a hue and cry that something be done.

The decision to hire unarmed, private security to help ease public safety concern is one recommended by Police Chief Norma Hardy.

The town will now contract with Securitas, a global security firm that employs 8,000 people worldwide, for \$39 per hour for a total of \$2,184 per week to cover the garage from 3 to 11 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Keene-based Hill Street ■ SEE SECURITY, A2

Dever to step down from WSESD board

Cites 'heavy load' and time to do the work 'the way it deserves to be done'

By Virginia Ray
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—Lana Dever is stepping down from the Windham Southeast School District (WSESD) school board, effective June 16.

"The merged board with 10 schools is new and it is a heavy load," the board's Brattleboro representative told *The Commons* of her decision to resign.

"This is a job with a ton of work and minimal support done by people who care deeply," Dever continued. "This new iteration of the board requires a massive amount of work and it

isn't sustainable for myself, who is also a working mother and in grad school. To do it the way it deserves to be done requires countless hours of work."

Dever noted, for instance, that recent issues requiring grievances or contracts required six executive sessions — after regular school board meetings — and some ended at 10 p.m.

"The people who are doing it are doing us an amazing, amazing public service," she said. "Every single person — even when I didn't agree with them — cares deeply and is working incredibly hard to understand the issues."

■ SEE DEVER RESIGNS, A2

A scrappy start

Becca Balint, Vermont's first-year U.S. representative, reflects on going viral on the right-wing demonization of LGBTQ Americans, on the dysfunction in the House, and still making connections in the best interest of Vermonters

By Joyce Marcel
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—An unexpected consequence of sending Windham County's own Congresswoman Becca Balint, D-Vt., to Washington is that she has become a national media star.

Balint went viral last week when she defended trans kids during a hearing on corporate governance. And why trans kids were being discussed during a meeting on corporate governance was exactly the reason why she

went viral. The House Oversight Committee was holding a hearing on the effects of ESG (environmental, social, and governance), an investing strategy that "[looks] at environmental issues and social issues in terms of how we invest our money for long-term investments," Balint said. "And that could mean divesting a portfolio from fossil fuels, for example."

First, she said, "you think about who are the witnesses that are coming, and you develop a line of questioning." The Republican majority



In a moment from a House Oversight Committee meeting that went viral, U.S. Rep. Becca Balint, D-Vt., confronts Mandy Gunasekara, a witness who disparagingly referenced transgender children in testimony about investment policies. "Do you really believe that garbage?" Balint asked.

invited a former Trump administration official and others from the political right. The Democrats' witness would be "talking about the extent to which anyone managing investment funds should be

keeping the best interests of their clients in mind," she said.

Balint said she developed "a whole separate line of questioning I was going to follow" — but that was before she saw the

June 6 testimony from Mandy Gunasekara.

The director of the Independent Women's Forum's Center for Energy and

■ SEE BALINT, A5

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We welcome story ideas and news tips. Please contact the newsroom at news@commonsnews.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 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@commonsnews.org.

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

Security

FROM SECTION FRONT

Security will charge \$35 per hour — a total of \$1,960 per week — to cover the library, municipal, and recreation centers from 2 to 10 p.m. The parking system has been estimated to bring in about \$650,000 per year in revenue to the town.

Town Manger John Potter said he and staff members appreciated a priority of a recent Selectboard retreat of “making the transportation center a good place, and especially a good place for parking, and we are ready on it.”

He said the Department of Public Works is taking steps to help the situation and staff members are keeping the lights on at all times, limiting access to the elevator at night, and putting a “strong effort” into daily cleaning, upkeep, and repairs.

A new camera system is also being installed and lighting has been improved.

Calling it “an innovative approach to create order out of the chaos our Transportation Center has become,” board member Elizabeth McLoughlin said she supports and applauds the move.

She said that crimes need to be witnessed to produce arrests, and adding private security will help “provide witness and evidence” for arrests as “an interim measure” until a full police force can be mustered.

She said she sees it also as a deterrent to crime and noted that many crimes in town are against “women and children” and this will help create “the eyes and ears for the police.”

Board member Peter Case called the measure “long overdue” and said he thinks a majority of “what’s driving folks crazy” are the crimes “that can’t be put in a spreadsheet.”

“It’s just time to stop, and I think just having a presence will eliminate that, at least from our downtown area,” Case said.

Board member Franz Reichsman said he was “initially skeptical,” and asked how the initiative will be supervised.

Assistant Police Chief Jeremy Evans said he and the chief had a “lively” conversation about hiring security officers who are not police officers as well as hiring officers from the Windham County Sheriff’s office.

They decided against the latter, “mostly” to offer the town more control over law enforcement activities, he said.

“Every community is different,” Evans said, adding that both companies’ hires will be supervised by the police department.

“We don’t want them doing law enforcement activities. We want them providing a solid presence and reporting back to us,” he said.

Evans said police want a consistent and positive presence during the hours when people “perceive” the garage is most

unsafe “and when we see problems occurring.”

The town expects five candidates for the force to be at the Vermont Police Academy this summer.

Board member Daniel Quipp, who had started an online discourse that saw dozens of comments, said it “remained to be seen” if spending \$113,000 per year on the private detail will prove successful but said that it is worth a try.

“I think we should have curiosity about the needs of people who are in that location and not just say, ‘Move along,’” he said.

Quipp noted that such needs might include access to a bathroom or shade, for instance, and said the board should consider investing in public restrooms and parks.

However, said Potter, this is a pilot program and not set in stone for any amount of time.

He noted that the new cameras and new officers later may “change the picture for how we manage an area like this.”

Potter suggested the program be re-evaluated in 8 to 10 weeks. Until then, the security details, estimated at \$30,000 to \$40,000, will be paid from the general fund.

Public responds to the plan

“My head wants to explode,” said resident Dick DeGray, responding to what he described as “the hypocrisy I’ve heard here tonight.”

“The only reason you are reacting to the cries from the public for over a year is because somebody pulled a knife on somebody,” the former longtime board member said. “No action is your action plan.”

DeGray went on to say that there’s a “lot more activity” going on than at the facilities the private duty force will cover.

Hill Street Security owner John Raffensberger said the private security presence will have an immediate effect.

“It’s like cockroaches running away when you turn the light on,” he said of the results he’s seen elsewhere when his company comes to a situation.

“I think it will have a positive effect,” said Michelle Simpson, executive director of the Boys and Girls Club of Brattleboro. “Putting security in there is just standard best practice. This is not some outlandish proposal [...] and it really is a crime deterrent.”

“We will feel the effects of this every day,” she said.

Resident Casey Viato asked for data regarding crimes against women and children in the downtown area. She also requested talking more about the Community Safety Review and how the Community Safety Fund could be used to create more resources for people.

Dever resigns

FROM SECTION FRONT



Lana Dever of Brattleboro, shown here at the WSESD board meeting on June 13, will step down from the Windham Southeast School District Board.

“You do want a board with different opinions and perspectives, and you want healthy discord, and I think we do that well,” Dever said. “I’m really deeply sad to be leaving.”

Dever won the seat in the March 2022 election, besting contender Peter Case for a three-year term. In that election, she and current board Vice Chair Deborah Stanford became the first directors of color on the board, which now has three with this year’s election of Eva Nolan.

When running for the office, she said that as a board member, she would “listen to all members of our combined communities and work towards mutual agreements that acknowledge our shared interests and unique circumstances,” said Dever, the transitions and empowerment coordinator and youth-in-transition case manager for Youth Services.

“The broader scope of the current board allows us to reach across town lines and become a stronger community,” she said. “I look forward to the opportunity to work towards compassionate and equitable solutions to the problems we currently face.”

“I can’t say enough what a pleasure and a privilege it has been to work with Lana,” said board colleague Tim Maciel. “At times, she was the best person for the board, voicing opinions on crucially important issues that made us a better district, that resulted in a better learning environment for our students — all of our students.”

Maciel said he believes “the last time we saw this was when she spoke out so eloquently on the mascot issue.”

“We heard the strong voice of a person with not only the passion that comes out of her own lived experiences, but also a person who was well informed and intelligent in her analysis of a sensitive issue,” Maciel said. “Lana was a champion of social issues long before she joined the board, and I have no doubt she will continue to be a devoted member of our community for many years to come.”

On a personal note, Maciel said he would also miss “her kindness, her humor, and her deep compassion for others,

but I’ll also be thankful for what I trust will be a lasting friendship.”

A longtime activist, Dever has volunteered in numerous ways, including delivering Meals on Wheels, and she has served on the board of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Vermont, where she continues to volunteer as a Big Sister.

She has assisted volunteer dentistry both abroad and in the local walk-in clinic, served on the allocations committee for United Way of Windham County, and worked in multiple capacities with The Root Social Justice Center.

Dever also served on the town Community Safety Review Committee to collaboratively work to find a safe and equitable solution to over-policing and harm reduction.

She plans to stay active, retaining her seat on the WSESD Social Justice Committee.

“I will be involved,” she said. “Paying attention, supporting the current board, and attending meetings when I can, and being an advocating voice on the other side.”

Dever is most proud, she said, of the inclusion of student representatives to the board and the advisory group, and of the input students have brought to light.

“To see those powerful voices — these kids are fantastic,” she said. “They really step up. We have some amazing schools in

the districts we serve, and the caliber of students I’ve met, we’re doing such a great job.”

Still, “we can do better,” Dever said.

“But overall, I really think we’re doing a great job,” she said, noting that she works with “a lot of administrators and educators and parents who show up every day and put their all in the work, and I don’t think we celebrate that enough,” she continued.

She noted the district has gone through much “upheaval” this year.

The WSESD has not only faced post-pandemic educational and social/emotional challenges for students but also the stress of dismissing the former principal and the ongoing sexual abuse investigation district-wide and working to address the issue of the Colonels name once and for all.

“And we’re still making gains,” Dever said, urging people to “show up.”

“The board listens to all voices, and they respond in real time,” she said. “We’re human beings in our community. I have a child in elementary school. We care. We care.”

Her last official day will be on graduation day for Brattleboro Union High School. She plans to attend the ceremony.

“I want to cheer this group of students on their journey and end on a high note,” she said.

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MILESTONES

Births, deaths, and news of people from Windham County

College news

The following local students recently earned associate degrees from Community College of Vermont at its 2023 spring commencement: Melissa R. French and Laurel Es Salter-Dimma of Bellows Falls, Christina Leigh Howe and Myllasa Riggins of Brattleboro, Denny Ray Hughes of Guilford, Emma Paige Lane of Jamaica, Paige Rohane of Putney, Haley Jean Brown of South Newfane, Tiffany Marie Allen and Emily Ann Maturo of Wardsboro, Alexis Grisales and Hannah Faith Hoffman of West Dover, Zachary Miles Condon of Whitingham, and Melissa Alicia Sutton of Wilmington.

Hana Kusumi, a government and philosophy major from South Londonderry, received her degree with the Class of 2023 at St. Laurence University in Canton, New York.

The following local students earned degrees from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York: Elijah Burdo of Brattleboro, B.S. in computer science and Christopher Metcalfe of South Londonderry, B.S. in mechanical engineering.

Owen Ameden of Jamaica and Arin Bates of West Wardsboro were named to the Dean's List for the spring 2023 semester at Clarkson University in Potsdam, New York.

Jesse Peter Dykes of West Wardsboro, a sophomore majoring in computer science, was named a Presidential Scholar for the spring 2023 semester at Clarkson University. Presidential Scholars must achieve a minimum 3.80 grade-point average and carry at least 14 credit hours.

Kaie Quigley of West Wardsboro and Lacy Hudson of Grafton were named to the Dean's List for the spring 2023 semester at Lasell University in Newton, Massachusetts.

John Peloso of Townshend and Sydney Henry of Brattleboro were named to the Dean's List for the spring 2023 semester at Stonehill College in Easton, Massachusetts.

Keigan Illingworth, a dance major from Westminster, was named to the Dean's List for the spring 2023 semester at Hofstra University in Hempstead, N.Y.

Ruby Powers, a media arts and design major from Dummerston, was named to the Dean's List for the spring 2023 semester at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Emeline L. Stewart of Wilmington was named to the Dean's List for the spring 2023 semester at Fairfield (Conn.) University.

School news

Hazel Handy of Brattleboro, Sophie Richards of Brattleboro, and Alicia Chechile of Vernon, all members of the Class of 2023, recently graduated from Northfield Mount Hermon in Mount Hermon, Massachusetts.

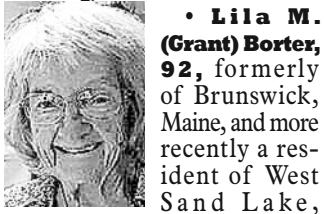
Obituaries



John Harvey Babbitt, 95, of Putney. Died peacefully due to natural causes on June 7, 2023

John was born Feb. 3, 1928 in Brattleboro, the second eldest of 10 children to Kenneth and Ruth Babbitt. As a young boy, they lived in an old farmhouse in Dummerston Center, until the family bought a farm in Westminster West. This was the post-Depression era and times were difficult for all, especially for a family of 12. However, working together they found ways to put food on the table, through hunting, bartering, growing their own crops, and their herd of dairy cows. The work was hard and the days long, and yet they still found time and space for fun and mischief. It was always interesting, at family get-togethers, to hear the stories of their younger years. When he was 17, John joined the Army and proceeded to embark on the next major chapter of his life. It was the end of World War II, and he found himself stationed at the Army base in Wurzburg, Germany, where he met Elisabeth Helena Bekiesch, the person that he was destined to spend the rest of his life with. Liz worked on the base, in the commissary which John frequented. They dated and fell in love. When John was reassigned state-side, he did not want to leave her behind, and applied for an extension to stay for the required one-year wait period for military personnel to marry non-USA citizens. In March 1950, they were married in Wurzburg and, shortly thereafter, they moved to the United States. During the early years of their marriage, they moved around the United States, including Texas, Oklahoma, Massachusetts, and Detroit. In the later years, Liz and the children were based in Brattleboro, while John was stationed overseas. He found his place in the Army, working his way through the ranks, until achieving the rank of major. After 20 years of service, he retired from the military, and they settled in Putney to raise their family. They built a beautiful home together with their own hands, including everything from pouring the foundation to sanding and varnishing the trim. The property had acres of lawns and gardens and a beautiful view of New Hampshire and the Connecticut River Valley. John was very proud of the home that he built and enjoyed a lifetime of maintaining and updating the home and surrounding property. After 20 years in the military, transitioning to post-Army life was a significant change. However, he leveraged his military experience and selected civilian roles that required his unique skills, creating a highly successful civilian career as a parole officer, security guard, deputy sheriff, and security officer for the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant. As always, he excelled at everything that he did. Having been raised in a large family, he loved spending time with family and friends at both small

gatherings and big events. He always brought his great sense of humor, quick wit, and ability to be on the receiving end of such exchanges with grace, ensuring that he was the life of the party. He also enjoyed socializing outside of the family. He was an active member of the Putney "Viagra Club" for years, a group of "young" men who met at the general store in the morning to enjoy coffee and exchange stories and long tales. It kept them all young at heart, even though their bodies might decay otherwise. Even after all the years of being overseas with the Army, he was still an avid traveler well into his retirement. He enjoyed cruises through the Panama Canal and viewing the Alaskan glaciers. He traveled through Russia and China, and more locally to the Wisconsin Air Show and the museums in Washington, D.C. He and his cousin "Tiny" Space would venture to the Army/Navy games. He traveled as a tourist on a banana boat to Central America and back, growing a beard that belied his otherwise relatively younger looking appearance. John is survived by his sister Mary Mitchell of Westminster West; his brothers Edward Lowe and Michael Lowe of Westminster; his children, Linda Gavin of Stratham, New Hampshire, Patricia Babbitt, and her husband Allan (Skip) Thurber, of Putney, and Guy Babbitt and his fiancée Lisa Butler of Fort Collins, Colorado; and his grandchildren, R. Charles Gavin of Salt Lake City, Utah, and Mathew Gavin and his husband Tom Bonnar, of Marietta, Georgia. John was predeceased by his wife and his brothers Kenneth Babbitt, Francis Lowe, George Lowe, Richard Lowe, Joseph Lowe, and James Lowe, who died in the Korean War. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: Calling hours will be Friday, June 16, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m., at Atamaniuk Funeral Home, 40 Terrace St., Brattleboro. A graveside service with military honors will take place on Saturday June 17, at 11 a.m., at Mount Pleasant Cemetery in Putney, followed by a gathering of remembrance at noon at The Gleanery in Putney. Feel free to join the family at the Gleanery, whether or not you attend the graveside service. Donations to the Putney Food Shelf at putneyfoodshelf.org, or to support Alzheimer's research at alz.org/donate.



Lila M. (Grant) Borter, 92, formerly of Brunswick, Maine, and more recently a resident of West Sand Lake, Maine. Died on June 5, 2023, three days short of her 93rd birthday. She was the daughter of the late Elmer and Ann (Levesque) Grant and the wife of the late Donald Borter. She was born in Troy, Maine, and graduated from Lansingburgh (Maine) High School. During her younger years, she attended the Eleanor Miller School of Dance and performed at the Troy Savings Bank Music Hall. Lila worked for many years in clerical positions at the former Montgomery Ward and Co. in Menands and the former Trojan Electronics Co. in Troy, until retiring at 80 years of age. She enjoyed painting, crafting, cooking, gardening, knitting, and crocheting, and most of all, shopping for bargains. It was a life well lived. Lila will be missed by her children, Donna (Richard) Luby of Pittstown, Maine, Robert (Patricia Logue) Borter of Brattleboro, Thomas (Barbara) Borter of Pittstown; grandchildren Rima (Kevin) Brooks of Claremont, New Hampshire, Jeremy (Anastasia) Smith of Arlington, Virginia, Jennifer (Mark) Collins of Brunswick, and Jeffrey (Emily) Borter of Homer, New York; and great-grandchildren Madelynn and Braley Collins, and William, Jane, and Charlie Borter. They

all have a new angel watching over them. She is also survived by her lifelong friend and partner in crime, Catherine "Kay" Hagadorn of Pittstown, who provided road trips and travel adventures with lots of laughter, and her neighbor in the Brookside Community, Mary Ann Capece, who is owed a debt of gratitude for her help at any time of day when Lila was having difficulties. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: After her memorial service, inurnment took place at John's Cemetery in North Troy. For those wishing to remember Lila, please give someone you know a hug in remembrance of her.

Donald Thomas Burns, Jr., 78, of Bellows Falls. Died on May 30, 2023, at the Vermont Veterans' Home in Bennington. D. Thomas — also known as Tom Burns, Tom, and Burnsie — was born Jan. 28, 1945, in Gardner, Massachusetts to the late Donald Thomas Burns, Sr. and Jeanne Lemire Burns. A big man in the small town of Bellows Falls, he was drafted into the Army and sent to Vietnam where he was wounded by shrapnel to the head, causing paralysis to the left side of his body. Upon return from Vietnam, Tom endured rehab and physical therapy, and soon discovered he would no longer be the same young man he was before leaving for war. He did eventually embrace this, accepting his fate and his disability without complaining. He would go on to live life to the fullest. Tom enjoyed his friends and fellow veterans at the American Legion, the Polish Club, the Elks Lodge, the Moose, and the VFW. If he wasn't a member, he was an honorary member, of that one was certain. Tom was a man about town, waving to everyone with his raised pointer finger, keeping his hand on the wheel. This wave was mimicked when he allowed people to drive his white Grand Am or Lincoln Continental. It seemed like everyone knew him. The "town tour," as he liked to call them, were his daily drives through the square, recognizing whose car was parked where, so he knew where his friends were socializing. He was easy to talk to, and he knew it, using "Talk to me, I'll Listen" as his slogan when running for state senate. He was quick to help a person in need, regardless of social status or situation, never looking for a paycheck or a reason. Often, his advice was simple and from the heart, "this too... shall pass." Returning to Bellows Falls after his military service, he would earn his bachelors from Windham College, go on to own two well-known bars in the town (Meatland and Doc's Place), co-own a few racehorses (Slippery When Wet and Belligerent), and selling "sleeper beepers" or wireless connectivity before his time. He was successful at owning and operating D. Thomas Burns Realty for more than 15 years. He eventually married Lillian LeBlanc and they bought a house on Kissell Hill. It isn't clear if his neighbors were upset with Tom about bringing five children (four of them boys) to the previously quiet neighborhood, but Tom was an effective politician, keeping as many people as possible happy. Tom was thrilled at the birth of his daughter Jennifer in 1978, adding to the five stepchildren he loved. He was a father to Jennifer and Dad to all of them. He had a special soft spot for Leroy, who was born with Cerebral Palsy and confined to a wheelchair. Tom, Lillian, and Leroy would fight to put elevators and ramps in the Vermont public schools, post offices, and libraries; a beautiful cause that not only the disabled, but the town, would come to embrace. Tom would go on to become the Northeastern representative for the Military Order of the Purple Heart for several years. He worked closely with Vermont politicians to improve veterans' healthcare. Tom was a Selectman

for the community, and a frequent speaker at Memorial Day or Veterans Day parades. Tom was also a devout Catholic and sang in church every day, reminding people that "singing is praying twice." Over time, Tom would come to sing at thousands of weddings, funerals, karaoke competitions, parties, sporting events, and eventually becoming the "Green Mountain Cantor." With this fame and stardom, he accrued a following of elderly church-going ladies (groupies) who continued to send him cookies and fan mail right up until his death. As Tom's memory began to fade, he would become a resident of the Vermont Veterans' Home, and would sing for other veterans and the staff for their enjoyment. Tom is survived by a brother, Francis "Butch" and (Bette) Burns of Holiday, Florida and a sisters, Carolyn (Michael) Dunn of Seattle, Washington; his children: Terry and (Stacy) Warren of Everett, Washington; Leroy Warren of Worcester, Massachusetts; Larry and (Mary) Warren of Danielson, Connecticut; Charles and (Ana) Warren of Meridian, Idaho; Gale Paige of Providence Forge, Virginia; and Jennifer and (Richard) Johnson of Richmond, Virginia. He is also survived by numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren and his many friends who will miss him greatly. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: Visitation will take place on Monday, June 19, from 4 to 6 p.m., at Fenton & Hennessey Funeral Home, 55 Westminster St., Bellows Falls. A reception will follow at American Legion Post 37, with a toast that will begin at 7 p.m. for all in attendance, as he buys a round for everyone from the grave (as decreed in his will). A funeral Mass will take place on Tuesday, June 20, at 11 a.m., at St. Charles Church in Bellows Falls. Burial will be at a later date. Donations to the Bellows Falls Alumni Association, c/o Darlene Kelly, P.O. Box 172, Bellows Falls, VT 05101, or to Disabled American Veterans (dav.org).

Ellen Darrow, 89, of South Newfane. Died at home, surrounded by her family, during the "Storm of the Century" on March 13, 2023. She always said she would not go quietly, and with a storm that dropped 36 inches of snow, she fulfilled her promise. An artist, writer, a lover of words, fashion, and great food, Ellen will be best remembered as an artist with a wicked sense of humor. Her talents were expressed in many mediums including clay carvings of metaphorical scenes, collages made from unfinished drawings, and Pysanky, the art of painting finite designs on hollowed-out eggshells. No matter the medium, her art often had political overtones and was an opportunity for her to express her humor. Ellen loved literature and language and could tell anyone who cared to ask the Latin root of any obscure word. She loved politics and was an ardent consumer of news, frequently using her love of words to scathe politicians who didn't align with her sense of justice and compassion. She was a voracious reader and immersed herself in history, especially politics and World War II. As her eyesight began to fail, she consumed books on tape from all genres. She was a serious writer as well and won several awards for her short stories. Ellen kept a large vegetable and herb garden that included heirloom tomatoes, Japanese eggplants, and a variety of hot and sweet peppers. Her favorite garden staple was garlic, which she used liberally in all of her dishes. Her favorite meals were boistiferous, shared with family and friends and often included fresh mussels with loads of garlic and leeks, freshly baked bread, and a bottle of white wine. Her righteous sense of justice and fastidious attention to detail led her to serve on the Newfane Selectboard in the 1980s and 1990s, where

she was steadfast in her protection of the environment. Ellen lived in South Newfane for 61 years and will be dearly missed by her family and friends. She was predeceased in 2003 by her husband of 47 years, Dan. She is survived by her children, Chris of South Newfane, Jenny (Dave) of Peterborough New Hampshire, and Heikki (Michelle) of Virginia Beach, Virginia; grandchildren Ashley McDowell, Quinn Darrow, Anwyn Darrow, Trey Darrow, Kianna Darrow, and Bennett Saxe; and her great-grandson, Amos Darrow. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: This year's Rock River Artists tour is dedicated to Ellen's memory, with a retrospective exhibition of her artwork to be shown at Olallie Daylily Gardens on Saturday, July 15. More information can be found at rockriverartists.com.



Sandra J. Pechillo, 84, of West Brattleboro. Died on June 5, 2023 at the home of her daughter in

Windsor, Vermont. Sandy was born on May 18, 1939 to John and Lillian (Fraser) Plisko in Danbury, Connecticut. She graduated from Harding High School in Bridgeport, Connecticut in 1957. She worked in a variety of clerical and hospitality jobs. Locally, she worked for the Country Kitchen, The Book Press, Newton Business Machines, and TD Bank. She retired at age 72 from People's United Bank's mortgage department. Sandy lived at Westgate in West Brattleboro for more than 50 years and was very involved in the Westgate Housing Board and her community. Sandy loved spending time with her family and friends. She loved any celebration or holiday and gift-giving was her love language; she often gave her gifts early due to her excitement. One of her favorite activities was shopping and lunch with an ice cream sundae for dessert. Sandy had a strong faith in the Lord and was an active member of Agape Christian Fellowship in Brattleboro. She enjoyed her time with her Women's Bible Study, Children's Ministry, and other outreach programs. She enjoyed reading, crafts and baking. She had a great love for her cats over the years; especially her Josh. Sandy is survived by her daughter Pamela Pechillo Rice and her favorite son-in-law Michael. She cherished her granddaughters Kacey Anderson and Erin Rice, and was lucky to be a "Great Grammie" to Aayla Anderson as they shared a love of sparkly dresses and dessert. She is also survived by many nieces, nephews and dear friends. She was predeceased by her parents, siblings Lillian (Plisko) Zarr and Robert Plisko. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A celebration of life service was held June 12 at Agape Christian Fellowship, followed by burial at Friedsam Cemetery in Chesterfield, New Hampshire. Donations to Bayada Foundation, P.O. Box 1590, Norwich, VT 05055.

John Edward Ross, 71, of Westminster. Died, May 23, 2023 after a brief illness. He was born on Dec. 20, 1951 in Concord, Massachusetts, the son of Theresa (Curra) and the late Gilbert Ross. John graduated from Fall Mountain High School and, from there, he worked for Paul Galloway, where he built homes. John also worked as an auto mechanic around the area before opening up his own business, Ross' Tire and Auto in Bellows Falls in 1979. He was a pillar in the community for years. In his early years, John enjoyed building performance motors and driving fast cars. John did some driving in the Sportsman and Modified divisions at Monadnock and Claremont speedways. He was also a crew chief and mechanic for his son in the Pro-Quad mini stock division, where they had great success at the Canaan and Claremont speedways. He enjoyed his family and many great customers he met at the business throughout the years. In his later years, he enjoyed working on his classic vehicles and doing different projects around the house. ■ STORY CONTINUES ON FACING PAGE

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.

PETS AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION. WINDHAM COUNTY HUMANE SOCIETY. 1916 West River Rd, Brattleboro, VT 802-254-2232 • wchs4pets.org. Hi, my name is Curly! I came in as a stray so not much is known about my previous life. I do have a few behavior issues and would need an experienced adopter. I seem ok with other dogs outside of my territory, but I should live without them in my home. I would do best in a home without any kids. Cats are unknown a slow introduction would be best. Hi, my name is Lionell! I am about 50 pounds with plenty of love to give. I am very sweet and outgoing. I seem to like other dogs and may be able to live with one in my new home. Cats would be new and should be gradual. I have a ton of energy and need someone that can give me the exercise that I need. I would do best in a home without any small kids. I really am looking for someone to give me all the love and affection that I deserve. Hi there, I'm the dashing Denzel! I am on the anxious side so my new family should be patient and I would prefer a quieter home without a lot of chaos. I have the habit of over grooming myself when I'm stressed so I'm a little bald in spots and as you might be able to tell I am in need of a weight loss diet. I do like other cats, in fact I came back to WCHS with my buddy Shadow, so we could be adopted together or I can find a new feline friend as long as they are mellow like me. I am used to small and medium dogs so I could probably share my home with a canine companion in that size. Ideally my new home with have another cat or cat-savvy dog as my anxiety is worse when I am all alone. I am very sweet and affectionate with my humans and I am used to living indoors only.

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He also loved spending time with his wife, Priscilla (Merrill), who survives, and his rescued animals, especially “Earl the Pig.” He will be honored and remembered in many ways by family and friends. John is also survived by his son and his longtime partner Linda Hood of Walpole, New Hampshire; his daughter Angela Kissell and her husband Francis of Ludlow; a brother Jesse Ross and his wife Amy of Westmoreland, New Hampshire; sisters Karen Harper and her husband Lloyd of Nashua, New Hampshire, Judith St. Laurent and her husband Gary of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and Pamela Wentzel and her husband Willie of Springvale, Maine. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: There will be no services at this time. Because of his love for animals, donations in John’s memory can be made the animal shelter of one’s choice.



• **Jerry F. Rounds, 83**, of Brattleboro. Died June 3, 2023 at Grace Cottage Hospital in Townshend, with family at his

side, after a period of declining health. He was born in Hinsdale, New Hampshire on Nov. 8, 1939, the son of the late Guy and Marjorie Fowler Rounds. He was raised and educated in Brattleboro public schools and graduated from Brattleboro Union High School with the Class of 1957, after which he entered the Air Force and served until his honorable discharge in 1962. In November 1959, while home from the service, Jerry met Alma Chandler of Springfield, who was in town visiting her sister. They would be wed in 1960 and together they shared more than 62 years of marriage until his death. Alma often said that Jerry “was the only man who ever kissed me.” Jerry and Alma started their family in Brattleboro where he began his working career as a Brattleboro Police officer. The family moved to Barre when he became an insurance adjuster for Union Mutual Fire Insurance Company, his occupation for nearly 35 years before retiring in 2001. The family returned to Brattleboro from Barre in 1977. Jerry was an avid baseball fan devoted solely to the Boston Red Sox, traits that were passed on to his children. He was also a voracious reader and enjoyed old television shows as well as his large DVD movie collection. Most important to Jerry, however, was his family, all of whom meant a great deal to him. Surviving are his wife Alma, his children Michael Rounds (Margie) and Kimberly Ebbighausen (Jay), both of Hinsdale; grandchildren Tyler Ebbighausen of Brattleboro, Kaitlyn Leonard (Andrew) of Hinsdale, Meghan Rounds of Portland, Maine, and Mikaela Rounds of Brattleboro; great-grandchildren Heidi, Adeline, and Ronnie Ebbighausen, Danny and Ryan Leonard, and Addison Rounds; and several nieces and nephews. Jerry was predeceased by his parents, and a younger brother, Douglas. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A graveside service will be held on Saturday, July 1, at 11 a.m., at Meetinghouse Hill Cemetery on Orchard Street in Brattleboro. All are welcome to attend. Donations to your local youth sports organization or the Windham County Humane Society, P.O. Box 397, Brattleboro, VT 05302.

• **Winona Stone, 75**, of Bellows Falls. Died peacefully on May 9, 2023 in Brattleboro. She was born June 6, 1947 in Bellows Falls to Charles and Leona (Michaud) Bain, and graduated from Bellows Falls High School in 1965. She married Roger Stone in February 1972. Winona was one of the original majorettes for the St. Charles Knights of Columbus Drum and Bugle Corps. Winona worked many years for Freedom Publications and various area stores, “always” counting the customers’ change. She was an avid reader of James Patterson novels and enjoyed completing complicated puzzles. Winona is survived by her children Dawn and Jeremy (Marina), granddaughters Kayla, Kiki, and Jasmine, and great-granddaughter Everly. Winona is also survived by her sisters Denise (Dennis) Labby of Westminster, Charlene Farnsworth of Saxtons River, and Berdina (Deena) Ezequille of Walpole, New Hampshire, and many nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by her parents, sister Sandy (Dave) Chesley, brothers-in-law, Clayton Ezequille Jr. and Frank Farnsworth, nephew Ryan Williams, and friend Gary Hartnett. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: There will be no services at Winona’s request.

Balint

Conservation called ESG “a tool to advance the Left’s broader cultural agenda” like “efforts to promote ‘gender transitions’ for children.”

Balint had arrived at the hearing fresh from meeting with a group of parents of trans kids. The words made her furious. “The juxtaposition was just so intense,” she said. “I thought, ‘Well, this is exactly what those parents and kids were talking about — the cruelty of the Republicans bringing this issue into whatever other issue we’re supposed to be talking about.’ They are demonizing and dehumanizing, and it is incredibly important for us to take it on in real time.”

So Balint spoke. “One of the things that you said in the information you provided is that the dangers of ESG include promoting gender transitions in children,” she said to the witness. “And I want to know, do you really believe that garbage?”

Soon, Balint’s remarks were everywhere. It blew up on Twitter. “Congresswoman Puts Anti-Trans Activist on the Spot” said feminist online gossip site Jezebel. “Democratic Congresswoman Rips Anti-Trans GOP Witness” said *The New Republic*. “Rep. Becca Balint destroys Mandy Gunasekara for her ignorant, disgusting beliefs and rhetoric over ‘woke’ investment strategies,” said YouTube.

After the hearing, Balint went into a side room full of staffers who, she said, were wiping tears. “They were saying, ‘It needed to be said,’” Balint said. “And ‘Thank you for saying it.’”

Balint knew that the GOP had deliberately chosen to demonize trans people, with conservative think tanks writing anti-trans model legislation for state legislatures and right-wing political consultants honing a strategy to use gender identity and expression as a wedge issue — all at the expense of kids who are in the eye of this hurricane.

“This was a calculated decision that GOP strategists made in this last election cycle,” she said. “They literally sat down in rooms to try to figure out who is the next bogeyman we can go after.” They knew, she said, that the country had “largely moved on from the anger and partisanship around gay marriage. So they needed a new group of people to attack.”

“And they settled on that because they felt like it would rile up their base sufficiently for donors,” Balint said. “It’s completely calculated. And very cynical.”

The state representative is amazed by “the level of vitriol that is aimed at trans Americans and the people who love them.”

“It’s just a constant barrage of these lies!” she said. “There is an aspect of this that is about education and understanding. And there’s also a time to just call it for what it is, which is essentially dehumanizing people and making them the scapegoat of society. It’s horrible.”

Support from Democrats

Balint’s speech empowered her colleagues. “I think it inspired a lot of my colleagues to do the same thing in their hearings,” she said. “I’ve gotten a lot of good feedback that they hadn’t really been clear on how to bring it up, and they feel more confident now in doing that.”

Who better than Balint, a lesbian mother of two, to speak out in defense of trans kids? Who better to represent Vermont during Pride Month?

“One of the things that has been really delightful for me, in being a congresswoman right now, is having so many families come visit me in D.C.,” Balint said. “Sometimes they are parents of queer kids. Sometimes they are trans or nonbinary. And sometimes they’re just kids who are really interested in politics and have no idea how to get into it.” She called such interactions “a really a fantastic way for me to celebrate Pride Week.”

“I can say, ‘Hey, I didn’t know if I could ever get to this place, either. So let’s talk about your

dreams. Let’s talk about how you get there,’” Balint said. “And I get so much joy from from having those meetings with families.”

In D.C. Balint feels accepted by her party and its leadership.

“I feel very supported by leadership within the Democratic caucus,” Balint said, describing House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-N.Y.), House Democratic Caucus Chair Peter Aguilar (D-Calif.), and House Minority Whip Katherine Clark (D-Mass.) as “really, really good on these issues.”

“And my colleagues who have come in with me in the 118th Congress, my new Democratic freshman colleagues, are also incredibly supportive,” she added.

Balint did not think her sexual orientation would matter so much when she ran for election.

“I knew it was a big deal to a lot of people,” she said. “But I didn’t know to what extent parents would want to bring their kids to come in to meet me. I just hadn’t put that all together, honestly.”

Defining herself in three words

Balint’s general openness and willingness to speak out is making her stand out as a leader in this new Congress.

Take her catchphrase “Scrappy Little Dyke,” now on T-shirts and coffee mugs everywhere, as well as the inspiration for the title of a Burlington fundraiser later this year: “Scrappy Little Disco.”

Where did the phrase come from?

One organization, Elect Democratic Women, wanted to introduce all the new members during their orientation.

“And there are so many of us. This is the most diverse class we’ve ever had — more women, more people of color, more immigrants, more queer people. And so it was a very exciting time for all of us to introduce ourselves.”

With so many new members, leadership announced that each person should introduce themselves with only three words.

A long silence followed. “I could feel my entire class take a step back,” Balint said. “That’s really hard. It’s just three words.”

Her three words “popped into my head,” she said. “I just thought, ‘It will sort of break the ice. Everyone will realize they don’t have to obsess over their three words. They can just make it fun.’”

“So I grabbed the mic, said I would go first, and said, ‘Scrappy little dyke.’ And it was really fun, because it brought the house down.”

Others followed her lead with irreverent phrases of their own.

“And some of the older women in the caucus came up to me afterwards and said, ‘We didn’t realize that we were being so tame in the way we were interacting with each other. Now we feel like there’s a newfound freedom for us to talk more candidly about our experiences.’ And that’s all great.”

The next thing she knew, “lots of people were coming up to me saying, ‘That was so great.’ ‘We felt so seen by you.’ ‘Thank you for saying that.’”

Soon, her campaign staff wrote about it. Shirts and stickers

followed.

Some constituents were offended. “They felt it was too much, and that was surprising to me,” Balint said. “But you can say anything, and somebody is going to get offended.”

Balint said she did some fundraising in Los Angeles recently for a group that supports queer and trans candidates around the country — “and people out there who had been following me on Instagram said, ‘Can we get some of those stickers, too?’”

“So I think it’s just fun,” she said. “I just can’t take myself too seriously. I take the work seriously, but not myself.”

The Republican majority

Because of her position, Balint was a witness to the reaction of far-right Republicans to the recent last-minute debt ceiling deal negotiated between Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., and President Joe Biden, a Democrat — a deal that saved the United States from defaulting on its loans and causing a worldwide financial crisis.

“The Republicans didn’t have enough votes procedurally to bring the bill to the floor,” Balint said, calling the problem “a height of dysfunction.”

“If your own conference can’t have enough votes in support of a bill, you’re not going to get very much done,” she said. “And they didn’t have the votes.”

“And so Hakeem Jeffries essentially had a meeting with McCarthy and said, ‘We will help you get this over the line, but we want to make sure that when there are investments being made locally, that Democrats who have projects that they want to see funded are going to get funded as well,’” Balint said. “That was an important aspect of this show-down that, I think, in the end is going to benefit Democratic members.”

After the bill passed, those representatives farthest to the right protested by sitting down on the floor of the Chamber. According to Balint, these Republicans are now “eating their own.”

“I’m just watching the dysfunction,” Balint said. “We actually only voted on bills on Monday. And then the most extreme wing of their conference sat down the floor because they were mad at McCarthy for coming to a compromise with the president.”

Today’s Republicans, she said, “believe that we are the devil and he should not be making compromises with the Democrats,” she continued. “I don’t quite know what to say about it. And one of the things I was reading this morning is that there is no expectation that they will have this sorted out anytime soon. This could go on for days or weeks.”

Winning the speakership took McCarthy 15 tries, and he made many compromises along the way. “My friend Morgan McGarvey (D-Ky.), who represents Louisville, said to me yesterday that McCarthy has mortgaged the Speaker’s office so much that there’s nothing left to borrow, and the money’s coming due,” she said.

“And so the most extreme element of the caucus, the so-called

Freedom Caucus, wants more concessions from him, but there’s really nothing left to get. So I really don’t know how this is going to play out.”

‘Stuck with each other’

Any Republican representative has the power to call for a motion to “vacate the chair,” or to impeach the speaker and elect a new one.

“The problem is that McCarthy is one of the only people who actually wants the job,” Balint said. “The other being [Majority Leader] Steve Scalise, (R-La.). And Steve Scalise is not somebody who’s going to be able to get enough votes to be speaker.”

And so, she said, “they’re kind of stuck with each other.”

“It’s fascinating,” she continued. “You have to laugh, because the bill that held us up this week was a really, really important bill for us to be considering.”

As it turned out, Balint was being sarcastic. That bill? The Save our Gas Stoves Act.

“It was their own bill, and the Freedom Caucus members who want this bill — because you have to make the world safer for gas — decided they were too mad at McCarthy to even bring their own bill to the floor,” she said. “For us, it’s a ridiculous bill anyway. So you know, right now, there’s no real damage being done.”

The real damage, Balint said, is that the American people are paying their representatives to do nothing. Also, it does not bode well for the real work the House eventually has to do before the August recess.

“We have to pass a farm bill,” Balint said. “We have to pass an appropriations bill. That’s the long-term concern. And I don’t know what will happen. But the so-called moderates — I like to refer to them as the ‘Timid 20’ — have realized, ‘Oh, if the extremists can hold the floor hostage, we could do that, too.’ This is where we are.”

“The Democrats have to be there, not to just be witnesses to the dysfunction, but to try to work within the constraints,” she continued. “To not just hold back the worst of it, but to set up work within the committees and within the caucus so that when we do retake the House, we’ll be ready to move on things.”

And that, Balint said, is including a bill to do away with the debt ceiling.

But not gas stoves. “We have so many important things we should be dealing with right now, and that’s not one of them,” she said.

Common ground in a fraught political environment

The Farm Bill, on the other hand, is especially important for a state that is dependent on agriculture.

“It’s one of the reasons why it’s so critical that the Republicans get their house in order, or in some semblance of functioning,” Balint

FROM SECTION FRONT

said. “We have to pass a farm bill. And obviously, there are aspects of the farm bill that directly impact the agricultural industry in Vermont. But a lot of people don’t understand that.”

She also pointed out the food programs in the farm bill “that support hungry kids and families across the country,” making it a must-pass this session.

“And I think we’ll be able to pass it, with [Sen.] Peter Welch [D-Vt.] sitting on the Agriculture Committee in the Senate. He’s got a really great perch from which to protect things that will impact Vermont. There have to be some agreements that get cobbled out, because there are farmers and ranchers across the country that need to be able to grow food for all of us.”

Balint is proceeding with her own priorities during the session, especially with mental health issues and housing.

“It’s tough being in a minority,” Balint said. “But I am continuing to focus on mental health and to support any movement we can make on additional housing. Those are two things that are impacting every region of the country.”

She called those priorities “an opportunity for bipartisan work on issues that are not as wrapped up in culture wars, so to speak.”

In May, she and Rep. Bryan Steil (R-Wisc.) co-sponsored legislation “to develop and disseminate a strategy to address the effects of new technologies, like social media, on children’s mental health,” her office wrote in a news release.

“I’m always looking for partners across the aisle on anything related to mental health and housing, and I’m going to continue to do that,” Balint said.

The new class of Democratic representatives were all deeply affected by the failed coup that took place as an attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

“So although we come from different districts, and some of us are more progressive Democrats, some are more Blue Dog, or as they have rebranded themselves, the Problem Solvers Caucus, we all have this shared experience of being absolutely horrified by what we saw on Jan. 6,” Balint said. “And that has given us a kinship with each other that transcends where we fall ideologically within the caucus.”

That has drawn them closer.

“It means that when we have tough votes to take, instead of attacking each other on Twitter, we actually sit down together and talk,” Balint said. “Tell me, why are you thinking of voting this way?” “Tell me about your district.” “Tell me about your voters.” “How did this fit into your long-term strategy?”

She describes that conversation as “a much healthier way for us to govern with our colleagues.”

“I just couldn’t be more inspired by the people that I serve with,” Balint said. “I just couldn’t be more pleased to be in such incredible company.”

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Amanda Thurber of Lilac Ridge Farm in West Brattleboro speaks to a group of kindergarteners from Academy School on June 7.

Dairy diversification

has a dairy theme.

For decades, June has been promoted by the International Dairy Foods Association as National Dairy Month, and for years, many of the kids would get a glimpse of cows during the Strolling of the Heifers in downtown Brattleboro.

The Stroll ended with the pandemic and the disbanding of the organization that ran it last year. And the continued struggles for dairy farmers in Vermont make it tougher to imagine whether future schoolchildren will still have dairy farms to tour.

A rough time

According to the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, 11,000 dairy farms operated in Vermont in 1950. That number is down to 508, with 18 of them in Windham County.

Of the remaining farms, many fall into two categories: organic farms, such as Lilac Ridge, or large operations with hundreds of cows.

The economics of dairy farming have been out of whack for

years, and, with milk prices set nationwide by a convoluted formula — one disconnected from the costs to produce it — Vermont farms usually lose money on every gallon of milk they sell.

“The production costs keep going up, but milk prices have been stagnant,” Amanda Thurber said.

Lilac Ridge Farm has about 100 cows, with 40 active milkers, Thurber said. The farm has been certified organic since the late 1990s and has been part of the Organic Valley cooperative since 2007.

Organic Valley was paying farmers a premium for their milk and, with growing demand for organic dairy products, smaller farms found going organic a way to stay in business.

“The going was good when we first joined the co-op,” she said.

But Vermont’s organic farmers met a fate similar to what conventional dairy farms in Vermont experienced.

Mega-farms in the Midwest and Western states are producing more milk — regular and

organic — at a lower cost that drove down prices for farmers in the Northeast.

Add increased costs for feed, fuel, and other needs for the farm, and going organic may no longer be enough to save the state’s small dairy farms.

According to Amanda Thurber, the dairy operation on the family’s 600-acre farm has not made a profit in more than five years.

“Dairy is very capital-intensive business, and a lot of farms are not doing that well,” she said.

The Vermont state budget for fiscal year 2024 contains \$6.9 million of emergency financial relief for organic dairies, to be administered as grants through the Agency of Agriculture.

According to the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT), one of the proponents of the plan, these grants “will be available to dairy farms still in operation that shipped or processed their own organic milk in 2022, in the amount of \$5 per hundred-weight of organic milk they sold or shipped last year.”

Will that boost be enough to help the 127 organic dairy farms that were still operating in Vermont as of April of this year?

It is too soon to tell, but the first step will be getting the budget approved. Gov. Phil Scott vetoed it, and the Legislature will

FROM SECTION FRONT

Westminster Cares Garden Tour celebrates its 20th anniversary

WESTMINSTER—The Westminster Cares Garden Tour celebrates its 20th anniversary this year on Saturday and Sunday, July 8 and 9.

The centerpiece of the tour is Gordon and Mary Hayward’s garden in Westminster West. The Westminster Center School garden, Hope Roots Flower Farm, and a very special private garden in Putney will also be on the tour, held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day.

Tickets are \$16, or \$30 for two, and are good for both days of the tour.

Several special programs are planned. Eric and Ines Bass, founders of Sandglass Theater, will present two short puppetry pieces on Saturday at the Haywards’ garden. At the Westminster Institute, landscape designer Julie Moir Messervy will give a garden design talk and workshop on Saturday, and on Sunday there will be a beekeeping workshop by Nancy Frye. Entry to these special events is included with your ticket.

Lunches and beverages will be available for purchase in

the garden café under tents at the Haywards. Morning Star Perennials & Trees will have plants for sale at the Hayward garden.

Tickets are now available online at westminstercares.org. They can also be purchased throughout the tour, at the Hayward’s garden, (McKinnon Road), or at the Westminster Institute, (3534 U.S. Route 5).

For more information, email westminstercaresvt@gmail.com or call 802-722-3607, or check out the July issue of the *Westminster Gazette*.

Friends of the Wardsboro Library donates property, building to town

WARDSBORO—After 24 years of successful ownership, management, and major rehabilitation and renovation of the old 1840s farmhouse and barn that has served as Wardsboro’s public library since 1991, the Friends of the Wardsboro Library have gifted the property and building to the town.

The town agreed to accept the gift by means of a special ballot held on Nov 8, 2022.

“Twenty-three years ago, there were many who doubted that such a small group of determined citizens could sustain public support and long-term interest for the Friends and for the Library, yet, the official deed transfer from the Friends to the town took place on June 2,” the Friends said in a news release.

The Friends of the Wardsboro Library was chartered as a non-profit organization in 1991 to purchase and own a house with an attached barn at 170 Main St., with the mission of turning it into the home of the Wardsboro

Public Library.

The effort involved hundreds of volunteers over the years, serving as board members, as part of the teams running major events, and as hands-on workers in clean-up and renovation projects.

In all, the Friends raised more than \$800,000 to create a facility that has become the center of activity in Wardsboro. In honor of a significant donation from the Danforth family 1991, the building is known as the Gloria Danforth Memorial Building.

The Wardsboro Public Library has expanded since it first occupied the farmhouse to now offer more than 7,000 titles in fiction and nonfiction, plus various media, games, and periodicals.

Library staff and volunteers have kept up a schedule of public programming, all at no cost to participants, that includes a weekly knitting group, mahjong classes, regular movie nights, weekly after school fun, youth summer reading programs, and slide talks, to name a few.

be convening for a special session next week to consider overriding that veto.

Lots of eggs in lots of baskets

With dairy, both conventional and organic, seemingly a losing proposition in the Northeast, farmers have to be creative and adaptable if they want to stay in business.

Amanda Thurber has long been an advocate for diversification. While dairy “is still the hub” of Lilac Ridge Farm, she said the organic flower and vegetable farm has become an important part of the business since she and Ross got organic certification for the farm in the late 1990s.

A couple of years ago, the Thurburs turned their farm house into a short-term vacation rental to bring a little more money into

the farm.

And now, Lilac Ridge Farm is teaming up with another organic dairy operation, Miller Farm in Vernon, to create organic maple creamees.

Amanda said that, with the help of a grant from NOFA-VT, Miller Farm has developed a soft-serve creamie mix that uses organic maple syrup from the nearby Robb Family Farm for flavoring.

“There’s no other certified organic creamees on the East Coast,” Thurber said. “There’s someone out in California making organic soft-serve, but no one is doing it in the East. It’s just another way we can keep dairy alive here in Vermont.”

The Thurburs invested \$28,000 in a trailer to set up a creamie stand. “It’s like buying a car,” Amanda said. “It will take about three years worth of creamies to pay it off.”

The creamie stand had a soft opening (no pun intended) on June 4. The formal opening will take place on Friday, June 16, and Thurber said the stand will be open from 2 to 6 p.m., Sunday through Thursday, and 2 to 8 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays.

She said she “knew nothing about making ice cream” before teaming up with the Millers.

“It’s a whole other line of work,” she said. “I’m used to getting dirty.”

The Friends said they intend to offer ongoing support to the town-elected Library Trustees, as well as volunteering for the many of the popular community events the organization has hosted since 1991.

Going forward, the Library Trustees said are organizing the now-famous Gilfeather Turnip Festival, the annual Memorial weekend plant sale, holiday bazaars and Santa’s visit.

The Trustees are also relying on their Annual Appeal and hope that the people of Wardsboro, second-homeowners, and all library patrons will continue with donations to offset the costs of library books, supplies, equipment, and more free programming for adults and children.

The board members and volunteers of the Friends of the Wardsboro Library said they are “extremely proud to know that they have accomplished their original mission of creating a welcoming Library space in this small town of only 800 residents,” building and maintaining “a community gathering spot that is lively, safe, clean, comfortable, and functional.”

For more information about the Friends, email friendsofwardsborolibr@gmail.com.

Vernon Historians Museum now open for season

VERNON—The Vernon Historians Museum, located at 4201 Fort Bridgman Road, will be open Sundays, from 2 to 4 p.m., through Sept. 17. It will be closed on July 2, Aug. 6, and Sept. 3.

The main museum building, formerly Vernon’s District Schoolhouse #4, has a new exhibit, featuring clothing from their archival collection and replicas. Those who have visited the museum in the past will discover a revamped display space this year. The museum also features a farm kitchen, a period tool room, photographs, and an annex building housing horse drawn carriages, farm-related tools, an anchor, and many other items of interest.

The museum is operated by Vernon Historians, Inc., a non-profit organization formed in 1968. A special membership promotion is being offered through October at the museum and at events held by the Historians. New memberships and 2023-24 renewals will receive one Historians local history publication of their choice.

Events this summer include:

- Saturday, July 8, 2 p.m., at the Governor Hunt House in Vernon. Photographs of Vernon and Brattleboro digitized from glass negatives, presented by Charles Marchant of Wardsboro Historical Society. A Vernon Historians business meeting will be held at 1:30 p.m. immediately preceding the program.

- Sunday, Aug. 27, at the Vernon History Museum. “Mums and More Sale” fundraiser, featuring local wares, crafts, and mums from Griffin Gardens. Interested vendors may contact the Vernon Historians for more information.

- Pond Road Chapel open house, date and time to be announced. The chapel, built in 1860, is Vernon’s oldest remaining church and features a playable Estey organ.

The museum and all Historians programs are open to the public and free of charge. For more information, contact the Vernon Historians at vernonvernonhistorians@gmail.com or 802-258-4841.

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Newfane author offers message of hope and resilience

'On the Wings of a Hummingbird' by Susan Mills is a finalist for the Next Generation Indie Book Award

By Annie Landenberger
The Commons

NEWFANE—Author Susan Mills was recently named a finalist for the 2023 Next Generation Indie Book Awards (NGIBA) in the First Novel (Over 90K Words) category for *On the Wings of a Hummingbird*.

Published by Apprentice House Press of Loyola University Maryland in 2022, Mills's book starts in Guatemala and ends up in Providence, Rhode Island.

Having studied Spanish as an undergraduate at Brown University, Mills began to learn about Central America when she worked for several years as an accredited representative in immigration law for Catholic Social Services/Providence before moving on to Northeastern University School of Law in Boston.

She became immersed in Central American culture with the El Salvadoran father of her now-33-year-old son, spending time with his family, both in El Salvador and in the U.S. As described in her biography on the book's cover, some of her family members "journeyed from the war-torn countryside of El Salvador to the U.S."

And so Mills learned firsthand the history, challenges, and assets of Central American cultures

— knowledge that served her well when she began her practice as a bilingual Spanish-speaking immigration lawyer in South Providence.

Along with these firsthand experiences, Mills's material is gleaned from her more than 20 years in practice as a partner in her own firm, Mills & Born.

"[I] represented thousands of people from around the world, but especially Central Americans, applying for asylum, citizenship, family petitions, etc. I also helped many unaccompanied children gain legal status," she writes on her website (susanmills.co).

A lifelong activist, Mills's father was a university professor and her mother an ardent civil and prisoners' rights activist whose guiding aphorism was "social change is the purpose of life," Mills recalls.

On the Wings of a Hummingbird tells the story of a Guatemalan teenager who suffers the relentless scourge of violent gangs, poverty, limitations, and abandonment by her parents — both real and perceived.

Mills weaves a gritty reality of today with lore, ideology, and mythology of ancient Mayan culture, lacing the text with Spanish phrases, poems, and invocations that nuance the novel's tone.

■ SEE MILLS AWARD, B5

Brooks Memorial Library seeks new homes for some of its collection of art and artifacts accumulated over the years

Where did this come from?

By Fran Lynggaard Hansen
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—"Look at this," says Brooks Memorial Library Director Starr LaTronica as she holds up a well-preserved leather bucket. "This is one of my favorite items in the library."

The object, about 25 inches in length, has a name inscribed in gold on the front — J. Goodhue — along with the numeral 2.

LaTronica smiles with the delight of a history lover.



FRAN LYNGGAARD HANSEN/THE COMMONS

Brooks Memorial Library Director Starr LaTronica holds a leather bucket used by the Brattleboro Fire Department in the 1800s.

Some firefighters told her about one object — "one of the original Brattleboro Fire Department buckets. Each home was required to have one outside their door with their name and street number etched on it," LaTronica explained.

When the fire bell was sounded, the homeowner was supposed to grab the bucket — always filled with sand — from the front door and go to the fire.

After throwing the sand, the homeowner would fill the bucket with water and become a member of the bucket brigade. After the fire was extinguished, the bucket would be returned to the owner

whose name was inscribed. "If you were found to be home and you didn't attend the fire, you were fined," says LaTronica, with a grimace.

The original Brooks Memorial Library, when built in 1842, replaced the home of J. Goodhue, the likely original owner of the fire bucket. The stone Victorian building, still remembered with great fondness by older locals, featured three floors and two reading rooms with floor-to-ceiling stacks that held, at the start, 5,000 volumes.

That's not all that was gifted. In

■ SEE LIBRARY ART, B4

COLUMN | Creative Conversations



JAMIE GOODELL/COURTESY PHOTO

Harpist and singer/songwriter Mikaela Davis, center, will perform in Brattleboro with her band, Southern Star.

New album 'a meditative, transformative experience'

Mikaela Davis and Southern Star to perform in Brattleboro on June 15

WITH A NEW ALBUM being released in August and a multi-city national tour underway this week with her band Southern Star, harpist and singer/songwriter Mikaela Davis, 31, of Catskill, New York is garnering a lot of well-deserved attention these days.

The band, which performs for the first time at the Stone Church on Thursday, June 15, includes Davis on harp and vocals, Alex Côté on drums, Cian McCarthy on guitars and vocals, Shane McCarthy on bass and vocals, and Kurt Johnson on



VICTORIA CHERTOK covers arts and entertainment in Vermont for *The Commons*. She is a classically trained harpist and received a B.A. in music at Bucknell University.

pedal steel guitar. They "create an original and genre-bending catalog that weaves together '60s pop-soaked melodies, psychedelia

■ SEE MIKAELA DAVIS, B5

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arts & community CALENDAR

THURSDAY
15

SATURDAY
17

SATURDAY CONT.

Performing arts

WEST CHESTERFIELD Ten Minute Play Festival: What happens when: Sue tries to break up with former love - Nic(-otine)? Hippy helps youngster re-frame life from ledge of NY building? Basic elements of spy-craft - the exchange - goes awry? Myrna tries to forgive Herman for ultimate sacrifice? Suburban housewife realizes there's more to homeless Mary than meets eye and ear? Try to find love in under 2 minutes? Big government/business conspire to save America in digital age? Mother and daughter navigate road to terminal illness?
 ▶ 7:30 p.m. Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays. You can only find the answers at the Annual Ten Minute Play Festival!
 ▶ Through Saturday, June 24.
 ▶ \$17.
 ▶ Actors Theatre Playhouse, Corner Brook & Main St. Tickets: <https://tinyurl.com/5c3a9k8p> 877-666-1855; atplayhouse.org.

Music

BRATTLEBORO Ensemble Amphion Baroque: A Musical Journey through 17th and 18th Century Europe: These world class musicians specialize in music of the baroque. Using historically informed techniques/instruments of the period, Amphion aspires to capture the true spirit and sounds of the 18th century, music of passion and style -including works by Cima, Purcell, Telemann, Bach. Jesse Lepkoff, traverso, recorder; Owen Watkins, baroque oboe, recorders; Frances Fitch, harpsichord; Allen Hamrick, baroque bassoon, recorder.
 ▶ 7 p.m.
 ▶ \$20 in advance, \$25 at door.
 ▶ Brattleboro Music Center, 72 Blanche Moysse Way. Information: 802-257-4523; bmcvt.org.

Community building

PUTNEY Putney Library hosts Community Sing Alongs: These community sings feature printed songbooks including many traditions: folk, golden oldies, gospel, Beatles, old pop and rock and show tunes. Participants will take turns choosing what to sing; binders with lyrics will be provided. Putney resident Rich Grumbine leads the singing and provides guitar accompaniment.
 ▶ 7-8 p.m. The sing-alongs occur outside behind the library. Singers should dress for outdoors and bring insect repellent as needed. Continues 7/20, 8/17.
 ▶ Free.
 ▶ Putney Public Library, 55 Main St. Information: For more information, contact Rich Grumbine at richgrumbine1@gmail.com.

Farmers' markets

BRATTLEBORO Brattleboro Area Farmers Market includes Kids Day (6/17) and Live music: Over 50 vendors, bringing our region's best farmers, makers, and chefs all to one place. On 6/17 - Kids Day - youth (18 and younger) are invited to sell their handmade, homemade, homegrown wares at the market. Please, no craft kits or food mixes and bring extra cash, as kiddos' booths cannot accept market tokens. Live music, special events and workshops throughout the season.
 ▶ 9 a.m.-2 p.m. on Saturdays. Rain or shine. Live music: 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Kids can set up table anytime between 9 a.m.-2 p.m.
 ▶ Through Saturday, October 28.
 ▶ Brattleboro Farmers Market, 570 Western Ave., Rt. 9, near covered bridge. Information: 802-254-8885; brattleborofarmersmarket.com.

The written word

BELLOWS FALLS Mike Brown reads from/discusses his book: "The Umpire's Bunkhouse: Baseball Stories from Cooperstown's Dreams Park": Real truth about umpires: They come from all over the nation - wise/kind people who believe integrity is everything. During an era of major league cheating scandals w/ cameras hidden in outfield fences and threat of robots replacing human umpires, it's a timely read. Baseball umpires survive, if not thrive, in primitive bunkhouses with no heat/air conditioning/thin mattresses. Read how a baseball bully is handled/ultimately overcome with help from the author's friends in blue.
 ▶ 1 p.m.
 ▶ Free.
 ▶ Village Square Booksellers, 32 Square. Information: Call 802-463-9404 for book and event reservations or order online at tinyurl.com/ynf6yea.

Kids and families

KEENE Kid Flicks: Celebrating Black Stories - Juneteenth Freedom Day Celebration: Highlighting short films that share joy, determination, resilience, complexity of being Black and young. Explore range of genres/styles that span the globe - Family Friendly ranging from "Live Action," "Documentaries," "Shorts," "Animation." Recommended for ages 9 and up.
 ▶ 1:30 p.m. "Comic Escape" (premiere): Young boy unexpectedly finds a comic book that changes his reality. "Cupid's": Whimsical comedy love letter to NY's essen-

tial workers follows a whole class on the last day of school as they scheme to find the perfect partner for their adored bus driver, Ms. Cheryl, and save her from a lonely summer without them. "Generation Impact: The Coder": Jay Patton was only 13 when she designed/built an app to help kids connect with their incarcerated parents, inspired by her experience. Now she's creating a coding academy to help other kids do the same. "My Name is Maluum": (Brazil, N. America Premiere, English subtitles): Maalum comes from a home surrounded by love/Afro-centered references. When classmates tease her about her name, she discovers lovely legacy of her name and ancestry. "The Night I Left America" (Uganda, US Premiere, English subtitles): Anxiously awaiting the results of his mother's visa renewal request, teenage boy in Texas conjures memories of his life in Uganda. "Room Rodeo" (US, East Coast Premiere): "Daniel Kayamba" (English): Grounded and with a last-minute school project due, Jamil takes matters into his own hands to prove he's the great-grandson of a legendary Black cowboy. "Wolf and Cub" (U.S., East Coast Premiere, English): Father and son cross a world of imagination to return a bag of their mother's forgotten lunch.
 ▶ Free - but you are urged to order tickets (capacity in Huntress Auditorium venue is 76).
 ▶ Keene Public Library, 60 Winter St. Information: Tickets: tinyurl.com/2wu9w2md.

Well-being

WILLIAMSVILLE Deep Woods Nature Immersion at Manitou: Led by Amanda Kenyon, this multi-sensory/mindful experience is a unique, playful, meditative approach to deep relaxation and connection with the natural world. Inspired by the Japanese art of shinrin-yoku, "forest bathing," you will be guided through a sensory-awakening meditation and offered a variety of invitations to explore the forest in new ways.
 ▶ 9:30 a.m.-12 noon. Accessible for all levels. Includes short distances of walking, stops to explore, periods of sitting in stillness. Lightweight, foldable stools available for the sitting periods.
 ▶ \$35: Pre-registration required.
 ▶ Manitou Project, 300 Sunset Lake Rd. Information: Register: <https://landkinguide.com>.

BRATTLEBORO Brattleboro Zen Center (In-Person or wherever you are): One way to engage with the ecological crisis: This group chants briefly and then sits in silence for a half hour. All are welcome to join this peaceful action.
 ▶ 1:00 - 1:35 p.m. on Saturdays.
 ▶ Free.
 ▶ Wells Fountain, south side Windham County District Court-house, Jct. Putney Rd. & Main St. (Rte 30).

Community building

BRATTLEBORO Brattleboro High School Class of 1955 Reunion (67 Years)
 ▶ 9 a.m.
 ▶ Ramontos Restaurant, 1111 Putney Rd. Information: Register with Jean Bruce Momaney: 802-254-9212.

BRATTLEBORO Pleasant Valley Reservoir BioBlitz - Catalog Amazing Diversity - at Brattleboro Town Watershed Forest: Come out to catalog the amazing biodiversity of Pleasant Valley Reservoir, Brattleboro's Watershed Forest! A BioBlitz is a crowd-sourced community science effort to record as many species within a designated location and time period as possible. Everyone works together at a BioBlitz - scientists, families, students, teachers, and other community members - to get a snapshot of biodiversity.
 ▶ 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Meet at the Yankee Dog/MamaSez parking lot, divvy up locations to survey, and groups will carpool to the Gulf Rd and Pleasant Valley Rd. entrances from there. This bioblitz is being co-hosted by the Brattleboro Conservation Commission and Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center. Just bring yourself (and a friend!), some water, and a smartphone with the iNaturalist app installed. If you have binoculars or a macro lens for your phone, bring that too!
 ▶ Free.
 ▶ Yankee Dog, 94 Vernon St. Information: Register, or if you can't make it to the Bioblitz, get updates from the organizers: tinyurl.com/jzypuda4k.

Dance

WINCHESTER Monadnock Tri-State Dance Club: Includes live music by new band: "Rosie Porter and The Neon Moons."
 ▶ 7 - 10:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome.
 ▶ \$10 members, \$12 non-members.
 ▶ Elmm Community Center, 21 Durkee St. Information: More information: Tom 978-249-6917 / 978-790-9322 or Barbara: 802-722-9205 / 802-376-0317.



KELLY FLETCHER

Teams of glass artists will compete in a "Vermont Blown Away," a friendly glassblowing competition inspired by the Netflix series "Blown Away," on June 17 in Brattleboro.

BMAC, Vermont Glass Guild present 'Vermont Blown Away' on June 17

BRATTLEBORO — Members of the Vermont Glass Guild will participate in "Vermont Blown Away," a friendly glassblowing competition inspired by the Netflix series *Blown Away*, on Saturday, June 17, at 2 p.m., at Fire Arts Vermont, 485 West River Rd. (Route 30).
 "Vermont Blown Away" is presented in connection with "Glasstastic 2023," a bi-annual Brattleboro Museum & Art Center (BMAC) exhibition of glass art based on children's drawings of imaginary creatures.

On view at BMAC from June 24 through Oct. 9, "Glasstastic 2023" features 11 creatures situated within an immersive habitat designed by artist Cynthia Parker-Houghton.
 At "Vermont Blown Away," three-person teams of glass artists will create glass sculptures inspired by some of the nearly 500 drawings BMAC received for "Glasstastic 2023."
 Teams will have 15 minutes to design a piece and one hour to complete it. The glass creatures will be auctioned off at a later date to raise money for the Vermont Glass Guild's

education fund.
 Fire Arts Vermont is an art gallery featuring world-class glass art by master glass artist Randi Solin and the ceramic artists of Natalie Blake Studios. The glass works are surrounded by a carefully curated and evolving collection of unique gifts and jewelry from local artists.
 Audience members of all ages are welcome to attend. Tickets are \$10 (free for BMAC members). Space is limited. Register online at brattleboromuseum.org or call 802-257-0124, ext. 101.

SATURDAY CONT.

Visual arts and shows

BRATTLEBORO David Rohn: Artists Talk: David Rohn's watercolor paintings are deceptively loose and easy. Transparent, watery brushstrokes and soft gray penciled outlines, hinting at an effort to corral shapes and spaces on a two-dimensional surface. "Supervising a puddle takes all of your attention." He suggests, "Working from observation offers an endless variety of visual situations. I begin by gathering in. I yield to it. Later, I play with what I have harvested the dialogue between the parts."
 ▶ 6/17: 5 p.m. Exhibit runs through 7/9. Rohn: "I made a switch between being active/scheming to make a great painting, to being passive and just receiving the motif. Why should I have to invent anything when it's just there? It was tranquilizing psychologically, and it still is to this day."
 ▶ Free.
 ▶ Mitchell-Giddings Fine Arts, 183 Main St. Information: 802-251-8290; mitchellgiddingsfinearts.com.

SUNDAY CONT.

Professors Jane Alden and Suhail Yusuf Khan offer a workshop exploring mystical music of Abbess Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) and Hindustani song forms on the Sarangi. Alden's research addresses scribal initiatives, manuscript studies, musical notation, and visual culture in experimental musical practices. Khan brings together expertise from a performance career, creative ability, academic research to find new modes of expression in Hindustani music.
 ▶ 1 p.m.
 ▶ Free.
 ▶ CX Silver Gallery, 814 Western Ave. Information: 802-257-7898; cxsilvergallery.com.

MONDAY

19

Community building

VT Nuclear Decommissioning Citizens Advisory Panel Federal Nuclear Waste Policy Committee (Webinar): Discussion of potential recycling and reprocessing options for spent nuclear fuel. Reprocessing nuclear fuel, a practice long essentially prohibited in the US, is being discussed again as the Dept. of Energy oversees research projects in this area, reliance on foreign sources or uranium is reexamined, several existing light water reactors can use reprocessed fuel and some new reactor designs, if implemented, may require it.
 ▶ 12 noon-1:15 p.m. with Dr. Edwin Lyman, Dir. of Nuclear Power Safety at the Union of Concerned Scientists.
 ▶ Free.
 ▶ Webcast: 802-552-8456 or 802-828-7228. Conference ID: 340 082 993# Webinar Link: tinyurl.com/yct52cjt.

TUESDAY

20

Well-being

BRATTLEBORO Brattleboro Walk-In Clinic: Primary medical treatment for patients ages 18 to 64 in our community who do not have health insurance or who cannot afford their high deductibles or co-insurance.
 ▶ 5 - 6:30 p.m. on Tuesdays.
 ▶ Brattleboro Walk-In Clinic, 191 Clark Ave. Information: 802-251-8484; brattleborowalkinclinic.com.
BRATTLEBORO Meditation with Ami Ji Schmid: Psychosynthesis-informed/Mindfulness-based group meditation for all. No experience necessary. Weekly format

TUESDAY CONT.

starts with a "meet-n-greet" using a tried-and-true 3-part format, followed by a guiding-in to meditation, 20 min. of silent meditation, guiding-out of meditation, ending with a group share.
 ▶ 1-2 p.m. on Tuesdays. Offered by the Brattleboro Senior Center.
 ▶ Free (donations accepted).
 ▶ Brattleboro Senior Center, 207 Main St. Information: 802-257-7570, sclark@brattleboro.org.

Visual arts and shows

BELLOWS FALLS Carol Keiser Solo Spotlight Show: Keiser shares acrylic paintings depicting floral still lifes, Mexican interiors, and friends gathering, all created by the artist over the winter of 2022-23. "My work is inspired by the world around me, my life in the countryside of Putney, VT and my time living in Mexico, a country of color and contrast. Color has its own magic and energy and that is what excites me to work. My paintings are sort of a visual diary of my life, places I have been and things I have felt."
 ▶ 10-5 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays. Two additional shows are also on view: "5th Annual Vermont Summer Group Show" and "Deedee Jones' The Ways Of Water Solo Show."
 ▶ Through Tuesday, August 1.
 ▶ Free.
 ▶ Canal Street Art Gallery, 23 Canal St. Information: More information, call Mike at 802-289-0104 or email: artinfo@canalstreetartgallery.com.

WEDNESDAY

21

The written word

GUILFORD Talk About Books - "In Love: A Memoir of Love and Loss" by Amy Bloom: Visit <http://guilfordfreelibraryvt.blogspot.com/> for information about the book.
 ▶ 6:30 p.m. Copies available from the Guilford Free Library.
 ▶ Free.
 ▶ Guilford Free Library, 4024 Guilford Center Rd. Information: Call 802-257-4603 for information or to reserve a copy.

Community building

VERNON Vernon Community Market: This new Market features J&B's Curbside Cafe, handmade crafts, farm produce, baked goods, flowers, and more.
 ▶ 4:30 - 7:30 p.m. outdoors. Open every other Wednesday through Oct. 4.
 ▶ Vernon Community Market, Vernon Recreation Area, 607 Pond Rd. Information: 802-254-9251, VernonVTCommunityMarket@gmail.com.

■ STORY CONTINUES ON FACING PAGE

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Benefit concert for RiverJam Romp features Peter Siegel, Amanda Witman, and friends

BRATTLEBORO—House Concerts Chez Grossman/Peel, a small private venue, will be hosting a concert on Sunday, June 18, at 7 p.m. with Peter Siegel, Amanda Witman, and friends to benefit RiverJam Romp. All proceeds from this concert will benefit RiverJam Romp's scholarship fund and help ensure a smooth second season as they transition to their permanent home at Potash Hill in Marlboro.

RiverJam Romp is a local annual weekend event celebrating the music and dance traditions of Southern Vermont, the Monadnock Region of New Hampshire, and the Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts. According to a news release, "with a rotating staff of some of the finest trad musicians of the region, RiverJam Romp nurtures these traditions and strengthens

connections through inclusive, community-based music and dance activities."

Siegel is an award-winning musician, educator, and founding member of the genre-bending band, The Gaslight Tinkers. Influenced by the songwriting of Pete Seeger and Phil Ochs, Dixieland, old-time fiddle tunes, and Afro-Caribbean rhythms, he grew up singing on the Hudson River Clearwater. He moved to the Pioneer Valley as a young adult, where he became a long-time member of the Greenfield Dance Band and recognizable figure in the New England contra-dance scene.

Siegel lives in Brattleboro and is a public school teacher in Keene, New Hampshire.

Witman is a carrier of songs from old and evolving musical traditions that connect people

across a room and across time. For years, she has been a force in the development of Brattleboro's strong local tradition of participatory sings and sessions, including the Brattleboro Pub Sing, which she co-founded with English traditional folk music performer and academic, the late Tony Barrand, in 2011.

Witman also performs with Southern Vermont a cappella quartet, Big Woods Voices, and can be found most Sunday mornings singing at Fire Arts Cafe with Siegel and Shawn Magee.

Admission is by donation at the door. Space is limited. To attend the concert, interested persons may email brattleborohouseconcerts@gmail.com. The address and further details will be sent to them. To donate without attending, visit riverjamromp.org/donate.



Ray Vega

COURTESY PHOTO

VSO returns to Grafton Ponds for July 3 outdoor concert

GRAFTON—The Vermont Symphony Orchestra's TD Bank Summer Festival Tour is back with a lineup of American favorites for dancing and celebrating at five stops across the state, including Monday, July 3, at Grafton Ponds.

Guest jazz trumpeter Ray Vega joins the VSO and Argentinian-Italian conductor Michelle Di Russo in a concert of swing, jazz, spirituals, and marches.

Di Russo is known for "her compelling interpretations, passionate musicality, and championing of contemporary music," according to her website.

In a news release, she says, "We have been working hard, curating an unforgettable experience for our audiences, including commissioning arrangements for the VSO and classic tunes from jazz masters like Johnny Mandel and Duke Ellington that have influenced other composers like Bernstein and Gershwin. You really can't miss this unique experience; it will be a true celebration."

Described by New York *Daily News* as "a hornman with deep roots in Latin Music and Afro-Cuban Jazz," Vega is known as a prolific, state-wide performer and as host of Vermont Public's

Friday Night Jazz program.

"This coming July marks my fifteenth anniversary as a resident of the Green Mountain State, and I cannot think of a better way to celebrate than to play with the VSO," Vega said. "This is a fantastic ensemble and it's sure to be a fun-filled series of concerts!"

Organizers invite concert-goers to relax under balmy summer skies with "feisty, soothing, and unforgettable music" by popular composers such as

Louis Armstrong, Thelonious Monk, George Gershwin, and John Philip Sousa. Picnics are encouraged.

The evening culminates with a fireworks display following the performance.

The VSO TD Bank Summer Festival Tour is generously supported by the National Endowment for the Arts. Purchase your tickets at VSO.org/events.

River Gallery School to seek a new executive director

BRATTLEBORO—River Gallery School of Art (RGS) has begun the search for a new executive director.

The former executive director, Mary Lou Forward, announced in April she would depart the organization. In a news release, the

board of directors said that they and the greater RGS community "wish to thank Forward for her positive impact at the school."

"A committee of the Board of Trustees is enacting a process of interviewing interested candidates and preparing written

materials that describe the vision and mission of the school as well as the actual process of daily classes and collaborative work. They find this process to be interesting and exciting" said Judy Freed, president of the trustees.

She added, "putting words to paper about the ways RGS joins and enhances our community is valuable for all."

Until a new executive director is named, Donna Hawes will be acting director and lead the organization. Hawes has worked for RGS for nearly 20 years and has served in several executive positions during her tenure.

The executive director will oversee the strategic and operational objectives, programming, staffing, and fundraising for the school. Anyone interested in the position can contact jobs@rivergalleryschool.org with inquiries regarding this opportunity. The job posting and full description is available at rivergalleryschool.org.

BMC Season Guest Series continues with Ensemble Amphion Baroque

BRATTLEBORO—Brattleboro Music Center (BMC), 72 Blanche Moysie Way, continues its Season Guest Series Thursday, June 15, with a performance by Ensemble Amphion Baroque.

Ensemble Amphion Baroque is made up of world-class musicians who use historically informed techniques and instruments of the period, aspiring to capture the true spirit and sounds of the 18th century, "music of passion and style," they say.

The performance will be a

musical journey through 17th and 18th century Europe, including works by Cima, Purcell, Telemann, and Bach.

Performers include Jesse Lepkoff, flute, recorder; Owen Watkins, oboe, recorders; Frances Fitch, harpsichord; and Allen Hamrick, bassoon, recorder.

Tickets are \$20 general admission, and \$25 at the door. For tickets or more information, contact the BMC at 802-257-4523, info@bmcvt.org or bmcvt.org.

Summer art shows open at CSAG

BELLOWS FALLS—Canal Street Art Gallery (CSAG) presents an opening reception on 3rd Friday Gallery Night in Historic Downtown Bellows Falls on June 15 from 5 to 7 p.m. The public is invited to join the Gallery to celebrate and meet the artists behind the fifth annual Vermont Summer Group Show, Deedee Jones's "The Ways Of Water," and Carol Keiser's Solo Spotlight show. All CSAG events are free and open to the public.

The Vermont Summer Group Show, on view through Sept. 2, includes 26 artists: Clare Adams, Jennifer Anderson, Penelope Arms, Trish Baggott, Jessica Bigaj, Suzanne Chambers, Len Emery, Nancy Fitz-Rapalje, Judi Forman, David Gordon, Greg Grinnell, Judy Hawkins, Yvette Hendler, Carol Keiser, Jean Krasno, Su Lin Mangan, Jeanne McMahan, Aristides Noguero, Amy Pandolfi, Phyllis Rosser, Roxey Rubell, Lynn Russell,

Matthew Saxton, Dale Stevens, Veronica Stevens, and Kathleen Zimmerman.

The show exhibits artists working in a range of media and techniques: wood and bronze sculpture, reverse painted glass, drypoint etched prints, fused and stitched fiber tapestries, mixed digital media, jewelry, photography, intaglio and charcoal prints, oil paintings, watercolor paintings, and acrylic paintings.

Jones's "The Ways Of Water"

solo show, on view through Aug. 12, exhibits pastel paintings of landscapes from around the world and shares the artist's passion for water. Jones includes works showing scenes of Southern Vermont, Canada, Maine, Florida, Puerto Rico, and Italy.

"Water has always been a point of interest in my life," Jones says. "I have loved living near it, spending vacation or travel time in or near it, crossing the ocean by boat, sailing on lakes—anything to see it, hear it, feel it."

Soft pastel is an artist material made of mostly pure color pigment mixed with small amounts of water and binder, such as clay, pressed and dried into sticks. Jones applies the pastels to varied surfaces such as sandpaper, gesso, and pumice. Jones "follows water throughout the landscape," she says.

Keiser's solo spotlight show, on view through Aug. 1, shares acrylic paintings depicting floral still lifes, Mexican interiors, and friends gathering, all created by the artist over the winter of 2022–23.

"My work is inspired by the world around me," Keiser says. "My life in the countryside of Putney, and my time living in Mexico, a country of color and contrast. Color has its own magic and energy and that is what excites me to work. My paintings are sort of a visual diary of my life, places I have been and things I have felt."

Canal Street Art Gallery is located at 23 Canal St. in Bellows Falls and is open Tuesday to Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, go to canalstreetartgallery.com, call Mike Noyes by phone at 802-289-0104 or artinfo@canalstreetartgallery.com.

Athena Giving Circle awards 2023 grant to Boys & Girls Club of Brattleboro

BRATTLEBORO—The Boys & Girls Club of Brattleboro has been named the 2023 recipient of a \$5,000 grant from the Athena Giving Circle, a group of area women who pool resources to support one local nonprofit organization each year. This is their fourth annual award.

"We are pleased to recognize the Boys & Girls Club for their work with area youth and to encourage their on-going collaborations with many of Brattleboro's arts organizations," Gail Nunziata, speaking for the Athena group, wrote in a news release.

The Boys & Girls Club hosts after school programs for children ages 5–11 at Retreat Farm, teens at the Flat Street Club, and summer camps at Hilltop Montessori School.

Along with their emphasis on academics and outdoor recreation, according to Club Executive Director Michelle

Simpson, "The club is a safe place for kids to try new things, make new friends, and engage in unique opportunities. Children and youth gain essential skills toward character development and healthy habits of mind."

The Boys & Girls Club provides gateways throughout the community for its members, including in the arts.

"Their partnerships with arts organizations spoke to us this year," Nunziata said. "We love that discovery and creativity are at the heart of their offerings."

The Boys & Girls Club has developed programs with HatchSpace, the River Gallery School, In-Sight Photography Project, and First Proof Press, among others.

"The gift from the Athena Giving Circle enhances access to our programs, as the Club does not turn anyone away due to inability to pay," Simpson said. "Our top priority is providing

youth with a safe space to learn, grow, explore, and have fun while being nurtured by consistent and caring adults.

"Our highly trained staff are joined by teachers and other experts in the community to offer enrichment and academic support. Playing a game of pool with a mentor quickly turns into a geometry lesson. Preparing a healthy snack with the Food Co-op becomes an exploration in geography, botany, and culture. It may sound like a cliché, but broadening horizons remains the business of youth development."

"Each year the Athena Giving Circle is excited to explore the valuable work done by local nonprofit organizations," Nunziata said. "Our gifts are given to acknowledge the impact these groups have on our community. Our awards are a tribute to their efforts."

WEDNESDAY CONT.

Ideas and education

BRATTLEBORO The American Way, Profits Over People: A History (In-Person and Zoom): Nick Biddle traces the historical roots of money's role in power relationships from the early development of representative democracy into the present. The analysis identifies central dynamics in contemporary America as having germinated in the 1640s and developed with consistent logic from that point forward.

► 6-8 p.m. By shedding light on this continuum, we can better understand persistent world tendencies that don't seem to go

away but should: Social priority to protect/value/honor money over people. Unrelenting societal default that protects, values and honors white people over all others - in a word - racism.

► Free.
► Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. Information: Zoom: tinyurl.com/jc7r8ak2 Meeting ID: 849 9199 1517 Passcode: 918556.

Celebrations and festivals

W. BRATTLEBORO Sharon & Daniel Lead Free Summer Solstice Celebration: The highly participatory event will feature singing, dancing and merriment of all kinds. The gathering is free

of charge and family friendly. With playful harmonies, acoustic guitars, percussion, keyboards and upright bass, Sharon Leslie and Daniel Kasnitz perform lively versions of popular hits with a funky, jazzy twist. They've prepared a wide selection of songs for folks of all ages to join together and honor the longest day of the year.

► Sponsored by All Souls Church Unitarian Universalist, this event will be held outdoors (or indoors in the case of bad weather).

► Free.
► West Village Meeting House, 29 South St. Information: More information: Daniel Kasnitz: 802-380-1369.

To submit your event: calendar@commonsnews.org

Deadline: 5 p.m. Friday

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for more listings with more details

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FRAN LYNNGAARD HANSEN/THE COMMONS
An ornate and unidentified silver object is among the artifacts that Brooks Memorial Library is attempting to find a new home for.

Library art

FROM SECTION FRONT

Brattleboro Remembers, one in the Voices of America series of local histories from Arcadia Books, the late Hazel J. Anderson, a lifelong resident and longtime member noted that “the library also served as a museum with historical artifacts and paintings displayed in the gallery on the third floor. [...] The painting of the Prodigal Son in its impressive location [was] on the back wall.”

Now the sheer number of donations has overwhelmed the library’s ability to display them.

The library’s board of trustees has debated what should be done with such items that the library and, appreciating the fact that residents place a high value on local history, is now trying to re-home these items.

“We want to be very transparent,” Trustees President Ann Varilly says. “We want people to understand that this will be a very long process. It’s going to take a lot of time.”

She says that in the process, “we’re being very careful and cautious.”

“It’s important to us that all these items are treated in a caring and thoughtful way,” Varilly says.

As described in a news release, the trustees are “working closely with an independent fine arts consultant as well as experts at the Vermont Historical Society to navigate the technicalities and logistics of what is formally called ‘deaccessioning,’ with the explicit intention to ensure items that significantly relate to Vermont are retained within the state.”

Finding new homes

Approximately 150 items have no logged information that identifies their importance or who donated them.

LaTronica explained that, in the last 136 years, “People have always viewed our library as a trusted source and repository of history. We’ve amassed quite a collection of things that have been donated because they are beautiful, and the hope was that by donating these objects, they could be enjoyed by many people.

“These donated objects reflect what people have valued through the centuries,” she added.

“We have a lot of unsolicited souvenir vases and figurines, for example, collected from people’s travels that were donated which have no significance to Brattleboro or Vermont,” LaTronica said. “Most of these unidentified items have been kept in storage because the library lacks the space to display them.”

LaTronica walks around a private storage room tucked in a far corner of the library. It is chock full of paintings, chairs,

candlesticks, vases, sculptures, collectibles, and artists’ gifts.

“Look at this,” she says as she pulls a silver object off the shelf.

The shining, rectangular silver piece is etched with a complicated swirling design.

“We have no idea what this is, who donated it, or when,” she says sadly. “While [it is] beautiful, we don’t have any information about the piece.”

Because of the lack of documented local connection, “We’d rather give it back to the family of the donor, or to a place where its history can be appreciated,” LaTronica says.

Both Varilly and LaTronica are quick to remind the public that the treasures most valued at the library aren’t going anywhere.

The History Room will still be in the library, and there are plans to make the many historical photos available for viewing when some of the other artifacts find new homes.

“*The Snow Angel* by Larkin Mead isn’t going anywhere. The painting of the Prodigal Son is staying right where it is. The dinosaur tracks and the Mammoth tusk are staying at the library,” she says smiling reassuringly, though she notes that currently the dinosaur tracks are being housed in the staff lounge while they wait to be installed on a brick wall for safety’s sake.

The consultant will assist the library in relocating the unidentified objects to places where they can be viewed and enjoyed.

By early 2024, after as many objects as possible are re-homed, a list of what remains will be made public so that people can be informed about the remaining artifacts. The unclaimed items will eventually go to a public auction, with proceeds used to preserve the remaining items in the library’s collection.

“Here’s a good example,” says LaTronica, as she points to a wooden box which holds some kind of file and scissors. “I wish we knew where this came from and why we have it.”

She picks up a faded piece of thick paper that states, “CHINA BROUGHT FROM ENGLAND TO BRATTLEBORO IN 1793.” It accompanies delicate dishes — a dinner plate and a dessert plate — that feature a gentle, pale pattern in purple on a white background.

“In 1793, these dishes were a very exciting thing to see, and I’m sure the public appreciated it at the time,” says LaTronica. “If anyone in the public has a claim on them, please do let us know.”

LaTronica continues walking around the room. A brass candlestick sits next to a souvenir cup from England commemorating



FRAN LYNNGAARD HANSEN/THE COMMONS
Brooks Memorial Library Director Starr LaTronica, right, tells a library patron about “The Snow Angel,” a statue by Larkin Mead and part of the library’s art collection that LaTronica says isn’t going anywhere.

the reign of Queen Victoria. A huge painted portrait of Jacob Estey sits against a wall.

“This portrait will be given to the Estey [Organ] Museum,” says LaTronica. “They are very happy to have it. This is what I mean by re-homing items,” she says, smiling.

In the corner, ornately carved wooden chairs from the original library building feature oak leaves, flowers, and George Brooks’s initials in the center.

“These chairs will be restored,” says LaTronica, calling the set “another one of our treasures that we’ll never part with.”

“Here’s a happy story,” she says, brightening as she points to a bust of a Victorian male.

“We’ve discovered that this man was from Middlebury,” LaTronica says. “We didn’t know who he was or why he was famous, but people in Middlebury do, and he will be going back home soon!”

The library hopes “that all these items will find good homes like this gentleman,” she says.

Comment about the Brooks Memorial Library’s de-accessioning process can be directed to trustees@brookslibraryvt.org; please use the subject line “De-accessioning.” The trustees are particularly interested to hear from past donors who wish to reclaim donations.



FRAN LYNNGAARD HANSEN/THE COMMONS
One of the ornately carved wooden chairs from the original library building, featuring oak leaves, flowers, and George Brooks’s initials in the center.

Some pieces of 18th century English china are among the artifacts that Brooks Memorial Library is attempting to find a new

We’ve amassed quite a collection of things that have been donated because they are beautiful, and the hope was that by donating these objects, they could be enjoyed by many people.

—STARR LATRONICA, DIRECTOR, BROOKS MEMORIAL LIBRARY



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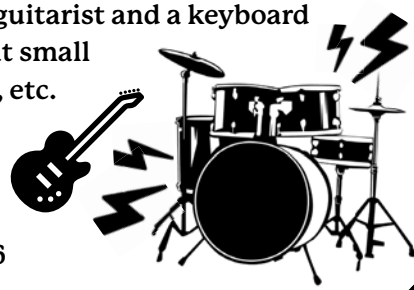
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Mills award

Petra, the central character, is solid as a rock; nonetheless, she's a typical teen who tends to believe she's less vincible than she really is and who Mills describes as "isolated."

"She's not been exposed to a lot; she doesn't know a lot of things," the author adds.

While interacting with villagers who've lost her once-firm trust and those she can still count on, Petra discovers her unique character, her loyalties and priorities, and her own sexuality. Petra finds herself kissing her best friend, who is soon murdered, adding another layer of complexity to the narrative.

Petra's life has been up-ended by violence in her small Guatemalan village, as have to a great degree the lives of her brother and grandparents. There, predatory gang members exercise full sway over aware and wary villagers, but police are nowhere to be seen.

Since corruption is rife and gangs rule in such locales, it could be more dangerous, Mills explains, to report a rape, a theft, or even a murder to the police: There's no guarantee that law enforcement there wouldn't tip the gang off.

Due to weakness and corruption in Central American governments and their respective judicial systems, efforts toward amelioration have proven fruitless, she says.

For instance, Mills explains, "El Salvador has tried to impose a tough-on-crime policy, La Mano Dura — a heavy-handed approach to crime. But they just put everybody in jail."

Thus, the prisons are full of very active gangs, she adds.

"They're hotbeds of recruitment," Mills says. "It's a mess."

Inspiration from life

An ardent feminist, Mills introduces us to several women in *Wings*, each with varying stores of strength and tenacity.

The initial inspiration for the fictitious composite of Petra,



Susan Mills

COURTESY PHOTO

clearly a hero, was a client, Mills explains. "But I never got to know my clients the way I got to know Petra."

That client had short hair, which, Mills said, is "very unusual for Guatemalan girls. She'd left Guatemala by herself — didn't tell anyone she was leaving."

Petra is not fully Mayan, yet she's influenced deeply by the culture's mythology. In the vein of magical realism, Petra escapes through lore and an imaginary friend since there's no safe space in her reality, "where she can actually think about things and figure things out [...] because it's too scary," Mills says.

"With the help of her grandfather," the book summary states, "Petra searches her suppressed Mayan heritage for wisdom about forgiveness, redemption, claiming one's future, and healing. The Mayans believed that the hummingbird was in charge of carrying the thoughts of humans between the earth and the gods. That hummingbird flutters inside Petra, sometimes appearing as an imaginary friend, carrying messages from her daily life to her determined spirit."

FROM SECTION FRONT

Village Square Booksellers features BFUHS alumnus Michael Brown



Michael Brown

BELLOWS FALLS—Village Square Booksellers welcomes Mike Brown, a 1973 graduate of Bellows Falls Union High School, on Saturday, June 17, at 1 p.m., to read from and discuss his book, *The Umpire's Bunkhouse: Baseball Stories from Cooperstown's Dreams Park*.

Brown, who earned varsity letters in four sports at BFUHS and graduated from St. Michael's College in Vermont with a major in journalism, has had a long career as an author, umpire, referee, and teacher.

Umpires "come from all over the nation. They are wise and kind people who believe integrity is everything," according to a widely distributed description of the book. "During an era of

major league cheating scandals with cameras hidden in the outfield fences, and the threat of robots replacing human umpires, it is timely to read *The Umpire's Bunkhouse*."

Brown has many memories of Cooperstown as sports editor of *The Daily Star* in Oneonta, New York, and as he covered the nearby Baseball Hall of Fame in the 1980s. His personal contacts with stars of the game include Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams, Warren Spahn, Henry Aaron, and Cool Papa Bell.

As a journalist and public relations professional in Vermont, New York, and Ohio, he covered the 1980 Winter Olympic Games in Lake Placid. Mr. Brown was also assigned to the

International Ski Congress in Istanbul, Turkey, and he won several national and regional awards for college publications and media success. He also authored the award-winning Outdoor Legacy column for years in several newspapers.

Call 802-463-9404 for book and event reservations, or order at bit.ly/719-brown.

A long road

About being selected as a NGIBA finalist, Mills describes herself as "pretty amazed."

"It's been a long road to haul to introduce people to a debut novel put out by a small independent publisher," she said. "So it's wonderful to have the work recognized by a major awards program. It's really fueled my hopes for my own writing, and for writers generally who take on social justice issues like this."

On Friday, June 23, Mills will be in Chicago for the NGIBA recognition celebration at the Newberry Library there, coinciding with the American Library Association's Annual Conference. Livestreaming of the ceremony begins at approximately 5 p.m. CDT at [facebook.com/NextGenerationIndieBookAwards](https://www.facebook.com/NextGenerationIndieBookAwards).

On return, she'll get back to her next book, tentatively titled *Asylum*, a second immigration

story in which a gender-fluid paralegal meets a complicated asylum case involving a gay immigrant couple.

Mills says she's thrown *Don Quixote* into the story — the paralegal uses imagination and idealism to cope with reality. She adds that many of *Asylum's* characters loosely correspond to Cervantes'.

When not writing, Mills gardens avidly, works with her chain saw, climbs mountains, cycles, and engages with the area's Spanish-speaking/learning community.

And, she adds that she enjoys "the slower pace of life in Vermont, the closeness to nature."

"I have a modicum of hope that I can help build understanding and empathy for immigrants (and fiercely independent women, and victims and perpetrators of crime, and various others) through fiction," Mills says.

FROM SECTION FRONT

During the pandemic, some friends — fellow songwriters — created an exercise in which we were all challenged with writing seven songs in seven days. Each day we would send demos of other songs and give feedback.

"The Pearl" is one of the songs I wrote, and it was my favorite from the seven songs I wrote during that time.

The inspiration came from my Aunt Julia, who one day was wearing a pearl necklace. We got to talking about how amazing pearls are.

Pearls are often formed from a single grain of sand that makes its way into the shell of an oyster. As a reaction to that tiny invader, this beautiful object is created. I liked the idea that way down in the deepest, darkest part of the ocean something beautiful is formed out of essentially nothing.

This song is a reminder that out of the darkest times can come the most wonderful things.

*Mikaela Davis and her band Southern Star play at the Stone Church, 210 Main St. in Brattleboro on Thursday, June 15. Doors at 7:30 p.m., and the show starts at 8 p.m. For more information and tickets, visit [stonechurchvt.com](https://www.stonechurchvt.com). To pre-order the vinyl of *And Southern Star*, visit [mikaeladavis.com](https://www.mikaeladavis.com).*

Mikaela Davis

and driving folk rock," according to the band's publicity materials.

For Davis, releasing a new album — *And Southern Star* — is a dream come true.

"This album is more me than anything else that's been released," Davis says, calling the process of its creation "a meditative, transformative experience."

And Southern Star will be released via the Kill Rock Stars label on Aug. 4. Although her band has been playing together for over a decade, this is the first time she and her bandmates will appear together on a full-length record.

When asked about the band's origin, Davis explains, "Everything I've put out has had my drummer Alex on it. We grew up together. And then Cian plays guitar and Shane plays bass. They're brothers and have been playing with me for over 10 years."

She describes Johnson as "a great Rochester musician who would play with us sporadically whenever schedules aligned."

"He was such a natural fit, and we all enjoy playing together so much that he eventually joined the band," she says. "It was very organic."

"Mikaela Davis is a great representation of the genre-bending innovative artists we're trying to feature more," says Robin Johnson, owner of The Stone Church. "A classically trained harpist, she seamlessly weaves flower-child-era psychedelic rock with modern-triple-A pop sensibilities, crafting delightful earworms layered upon infectious grooves."

The Commons caught up with Davis on the road and talked about her band, their new album, their summer tour and why she chose the harp. Here's an excerpt from the conversation.

VICTORIA CHERTOK:

It's so nice meeting you, Mikaela — a fellow harpist! I heard you began studying harp at age 8 and went on to get a degree in harp performance from the Crane School of Music (SUNY Potsdam). How have your early educational experiences helped shape the harpist you are today?

MIKAELA DAVIS: My entire background is in the classical world. Studying with two incredible harpists, Grace Wong and Dr. [Jessica R.] Suchy-Pilalis, gave me the foundation on which my entire approach to the instrument is based.

In the classical world, technique is everything. I am grateful to have spent so much time

developing mine, as it is the way in which I'm able to express myself through the instrument.

V.C.: How did you decide to play the harp?

M.D.: My elementary school offered it as a part of the music program. I remember that in second grade, they took us to the music room and showed us all of the different string instruments that we could choose from the following year to start studying. The harp was the last one they presented, and I was immediately drawn to it.

I was very close with my oma, who loved music, and she had passed away right around that time. There is a skylight in the house I grew up in, and I remember wanting to play the harp under it so that my oma could hear me practice.

V.C.: I heard you have a funny story about your mother listening to a particular album. Tell me more.

M.D.: I am a huge fan of Swiss harpist Andreas Vollenweider, and several years ago I discovered his album *Down to the Moon*.

I fell in love with it and one day mentioned it to my mom, because I thought that she would also like it. Not only did she already own the record, but she told me that she would listen to it constantly when she was pregnant with me. I couldn't believe it!

V.C.: That's amazing! How did you come up with your band's name?

M.D.: Cian came up with it. He and Alex had a band in college, Southern Star. The name is taken from a variety of pipe-weed grown in the Shire in *The Lord of the Rings*.

V.C.: You play all originals on the new record and live. I hear you also play a few Grateful Dead covers. How do you come up with your set lists?

M.D.: We focus primarily on original music, and lately have been throwing in one or two Grateful Dead songs outside of the residencies we have done this year in which we focused more intently on the Dead.

Our set lists vary from night to night. Alex usually comes up with a rough draft, and we fine-tune it together.

V.C.: How did you get introduced to the music of the Grateful Dead?

M.D.: Well, I've been a fan for a while, mostly as a listener. My bandmates are the ones who introduced it to me more as a player.

I didn't really get fully

immersed until I was asked to sit in with Bobby Weir and Wolf Bros back in 2018. I didn't know the catalog at the time, so naturally I was nervous and excited to play with an original member of the band.

The Dead community has really embraced me, and it's been a lot of fun playing the music with my band. It is a great platform for improvisation and has taught us all a lot about songwriting.

The music of the Grateful Dead is challenging, unique, and vast. I've become a better musician from learning this music! And it's just really pretty genius the way Grateful Dead songs were written.

V.C.: You've caught the eye of many notable musicians recently, including Bob Weir, Phil Lesh, Christian McBride, Bon Iver, Lake Street Dive, and Circles Around the Sun, to name a few. What was it like sharing the stage with Bobby Weir and Wolf Bros?

M.D.: Playing with Bob Weir is obviously a tremendous honor. Wolf Bros is particularly fun because it's a three piece and so there is a lot of space for the harp. They really encouraged me to stretch out and play more solos. The experience really inspired me to approach the harp as a lead instrument in my own music and with my band.

V.C.: What style harp do you tour with, and how do you amplify it?

M.D.: I own a Lyon & Healy Style 100 semi-grand and have had it for over 20 years. It was made in the '60s and has a giant coffin case that is essential for transporting it on the road. When I got the harp, my mom didn't want to store the big ugly case, but luckily the seller insisted. I can't imagine touring without it.

I use a Barcus-Berry pickup to amplify my harp, the same kind that's used on pianos. Because of that, I can run it through guitar effects pedals to get sounds and textures that aren't possible with acoustic harp.

Sadly, harps only last so long with the amount of tension from the strings, and mine is nearing the end of its usable life.

V.C.: Your new song "The Pearl" on your new album is a special song to you. How so?

M.D.: "The Pearl" is a song I wasn't sure would make the cut on the album because it's so different. It's very short, and the arrangement is sparse. It's one of only two songs on the record I wrote entirely by myself.



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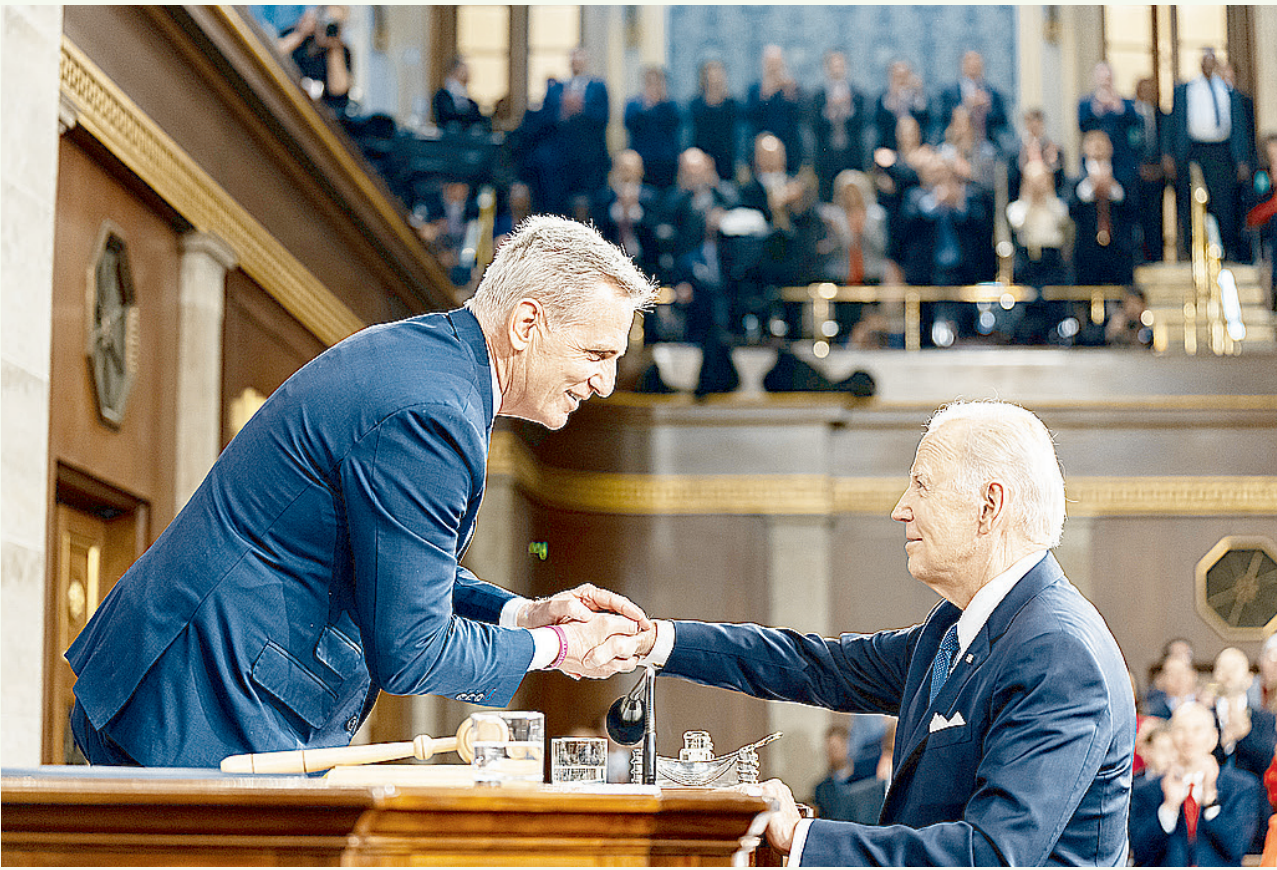
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VIEWPOINT



House Speaker Kevin McCarthy welcomes President Joe Biden to this year's State of the Union address.

The system worked

In the debt ceiling vote, days of negotiations were followed by votes in the House and Senate that were truly bipartisan. Given the stakes, getting something done was crucial.

Chester
I HADN'T REALIZED how frightened I'd been about the debt-ceiling situation until I found myself sleeping well the night after the House approved the deal struck between President Joe Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy. I wasn't sure the Senate would pass it, but this was a good sign. In the broadest sense, the really good sign was that the United States wouldn't default on its obligations and, thus, that the world's economic and political underpinnings would not — at least this week — be totally unsettled. I have reluctantly but faithfully followed this process, from the moment McCarthy sold his soul to the Freedom Caucus to the passage of the House bill that included so many things that I found

NICHOLAS BOKE is a freelance writer and international education consultant.

deeply disturbing. I'm one of Bernie Sanders' social democrats, a post-New Deal, post-liberal progressive kinda guy who hopes that America's politics will, eventually, look a lot like Norway's. I'm not squeamish about paying higher taxes myself and certainly support setting up a system that progressively taxes wealthy people (I like the anybody-earning-above-\$400,000-per-year standard) and profitable corporations. I believe that people and businesses that make a lot of money should give a fair amount of it to the

government(s), that everybody should have free health care, that all of us should be well-housed, well-educated, and well-fed, and all the rest. So I'M NOT HAPPY with the details of the debt-ceiling bill. (Of course, I'm still not sure exactly how all these details will play out in either the short or the long run, but neither is anybody else.) But, watching how all this worked out, I'm strangely comforted. I am comforted not because my side won. I am comforted because the system worked. It's not, apparently, as broken as I had thought it was. It worked because two people who probably disagree on everything from climate change to how to grill chicken were able to say, "I'm really, really not happy about what

I'm agreeing to, and I'm gonna get in a lot of trouble from a lot of people in my party, but this is the best we can get done." And, given the stakes, getting something done was crucial. LOOK AT HOW it worked. Days of negotiations were followed by votes in the House and Senate that were truly bipartisan. In the House, the vote was 314 to 117, with 149 Republicans and 165 Democrats voting for the bill and 71 Republicans and 46 Democrats voting against it. In the Senate, the vote was 63 to 36, with 46 Democrats and 17 Republicans supporting the bill while five Democrats and 31 Republicans opposed it. I'm positive that nobody

■ SEE DEBT CEILING, C2

COLUMN

Rethinking a huge (and neglected) toll to our environment

Working online has underappreciated carbon-emissions consequences

Newfane
I THOUGHT I was so environmentally virtuous by working from home and sending my words out into cyberspace. But a reader who responded to my recent piece about the carbon footprint of road building ["Our roads, at what cost?," Column, May 10] burst that bubble. She called my attention "to the huge (and very much neglected) toll that the internet imposes on the environment." She backed this dire news with a link to a peer-reviewed article published by the MIT Case Studies in Social and Ethical Responsibilities of Computing (SERC). "The Staggering Ecological Impacts of Computation and the Cloud," by anthropologist Steven Gonzalez Monserrate, is an eye-opening read. It includes stories from his five years of ethnographic fieldwork and clear explanations about how the Cloud is an ecological force — and not a benign one.

GONZALEZ MONSERRATE identifies four ways that creating, maintaining, and using the Cloud pollute: spewing carbon, guzzling water, making noise, and creating radioactive trash. 1. *Carbon and the Cloud.* Data farms, where the machines that make the Cloud work 24/7, guzzle energy and spew carbon — not just in sending pixels around the globe, but also in the cooling systems that keep the computers functioning. Heat, it turns out, is a significant by-product of computers at work. 2. *Guzzling water during a drought.* Vast quantities of water are used to cool these industrial data centers, many of which are in areas where water is an evaporating commodity. 3. *A noise worse than an earworm.* Data centers hum. The hum isn't necessarily loud, but it's constant — and deleterious. The physiological effects of noise pollution have been known for a long time and



DEBORAH LEE LUSKIN, one of this newspaper's original columnists, blogs at deborahleelusk.com.

include hearing loss, elevated stress hormones, hypertension, and insomnia. Even before the pandemic locked us all up at home, there were residential areas affected by the constant rumbling from the Cloud. 4. *Graveyards of e-waste.* Billions of devices have been manufactured, become obsolete, and replaced as the Cloud expands, creating a never-ending demand for new devices with more features and faster speed. The rare metals that make our devices work are mined in parts of the world where miners have few, if any, legal protections. Added to this human cost is the environmental one of e-waste graveyards, where toxic and radioactive particles leach into the ground. AS MY READER SAID in her email, "You can avoid driving, but staying home and doing everything in cyberspace doesn't fully offset the carbon burden." She says that we're "addicted to '24/7 instant gratification on the web [and] it's hard to see how to put that genie back in the bottle." What can we do? Maybe we could shut down, the way the television went off at midnight when I was a kid, in the middle of the last century. Back then, stores were closed on Sunday. When I lived in an English city in the mid-1970s, almost every shop was closed Wednesday afternoons, offset by staying open Saturday mornings. But that was when shops were run by sole proprietors, people shopped locally, and everyone paused on Sunday

■ SEE CARBON FOOTPRINT, C2

VIEWPOINT

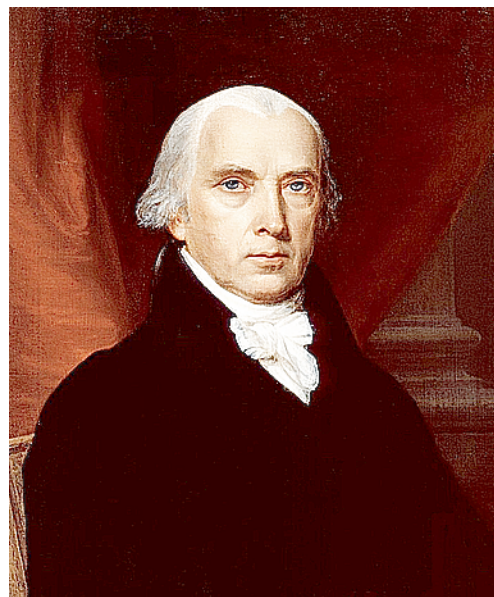
Two founders and religious freedom

One hopes that Christian nationalists will reflect upon the words and deeds of Madison and Jefferson

Windham
A BILL IS INTRODUCED in a state to tax citizens to support the teaching of the Christian religion. Opponents circulate a petition opposing the measure. The petition's author says that no politician is a competent judge of religious truth, that every citizen has the right to religious freedom according to the dictates of their conscience and that the Legislature has no authority at all over religion. He states that Christianity does not require support from the government and that history has shown that when it is the official, legally established religion of a state or nation, the result

BILL DUNKEL is a retired educator.

is clergy who are arrogant and lazy, parishioners who are ignorant and servile, and that "superstition, bigotry, and persecution" abound. Then he pointedly suggests that the only difference between the Legislature's effort to establish spiritual tyranny and the infamous Inquisition is a matter of degree. "The one is the first step, the other the last, in the career of intolerance." Finally, he concludes that if the people allow the Legislature to limit the free exercise of



Presidential portraits of James Madison (by John Vanderlyn) and Thomas Jefferson (by Rembrandt Peale).

religion, they might as well say the government has the right to control freedom of the press, abolish trial by jury, and take away our right to vote!

Who is this impassioned rabble rouser? Is he a left-wing radical, a communist, a socialist, a

member of Antifa? No, the incendiary author of this petition was none other than James Madison, the chief architect of our Constitution, the author of the Bill of Rights, the fourth president of the United States, and one of our most revered Founding Fathers.

■ SEE FOUNDERS, C2



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FROM SECTION FRONT

MADISON WROTE his petition — “A Memorial and Remonstrance” — in 1785 when “A Bill Establishing a Provision for Teachers of the Christian Religion” was introduced in the Virginia General Assembly by Gov. Patrick Henry and other conservatives, who believed that Christian morality was needed “to correct the morals of men, restrain their vices, and preserve the peace of society.”

The bill would have imposed a special property tax, collected by county sheriffs, and it would have used the proceeds to teach citizens the precepts of the Christian faith.

The bill was withdrawn after Madison’s remonstrance, and several other petitions, were signed by thousands of Virginians. After the bill was defeated, Madison helped pass the Virginia Bill of Religious Freedom, which was written by his friend, Thomas Jefferson.

In the preamble to this famous law, Jefferson wrote:

Almighty God hath created the mind free; that all attempts to influence it by temporal punishment or burthens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness [...] that our civil rights have no dependence upon our religious opinions, any more than our opinions in physics or geometry[...].

Jefferson’s self-designed tombstone lists three achievements that he most wanted to be remembered for: his authoring of the Declaration of Independence and of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, and his role as “Father of the University of Virginia.”

In referring to the Virginia statute, Madison noted: “This act was always held by Mr. Jefferson to be one of his best

efforts in the cause of Liberty, to which he was devoted. And it is certainly the strongest legal barrier that could be erected against the connection of church and State so fatal to the liberty of both.”

CHRISTIAN nationalists reject the time-honored principle of separation of church and state and believe that their religion should have a privileged position in our public life.

The Texas Senate recently passed bills requiring that the Ten Commandments be posted in every classroom and allowing public schools to mandate time for students and employees to read the Bible and pray.

The Texas House just passed a bill allowing chaplains, without state certification, to work as counselors in public schools, while rejecting a Democratic amendment that would have allowed students and parents to request a chaplain of their preferred denomination or faith.

Last June, Representative Lauren Boebert (R-Colo.), speaking at a religious service, said that the church is supposed to direct the government because “that is how our founding fathers intended it. And I’m tired of this separation of church and state junk that’s not in the Constitution.”

She referred to Jefferson’s 1802 message to the Danbury Baptist Association, in which he affirmed his reverence for the First Amendment for building a wall of separation between church and state, as a “stinking letter.”

One hopes that Christian nationalists will reflect upon the words and deeds of Madison and Jefferson.

Regardless, the rest of us surely should take them to heart.

VIEWPOINT

Unhealthy and deeply destructive

The far right’s bigotry, lies, and small-minded hatefulness are contemptible. But the far left is also damaging in the extreme.

Brattleboro
BRATTLEBORO, like much of the United States, is all too often putting the subjective feelings of the individual ahead of the rights and health of the community.

I have generally voted Democrat my entire adult life. However, in recent times, a frightening portion of the left has become so extreme that it is at times on parity with the extremist right.

I find the extreme right such as Marjorie Taylor Greene and Donald Trump to be abhorrent. Their bigotry, lies, and small-minded hatefulness are contemptible.

However, the extremist left in 2023 is also deeply destructive.

The concept of “woke” may have begun as a good thing, but humans have a penchant for bastardizing things. Woke has now generally devolved into militant authoritarianism.

I am not saying that all the left or all progressives fit this paradigm, but the following are general attributes just

SPENCER CRISPE is an attorney, a ninth-generation Vermonter, and an avid sugarmaker, hiker, skier, and skateboarder.

pertaining to the slice of the pie constituting the extremist left in 2023.

- The extreme left doesn’t believe in working. They believe work is an affliction and associate employment with pain. An honest day’s work is good for one’s mental health, physical health, and self-respect, yet, the extreme left believes everything should be done for you. This is not sustainable for a healthy functioning society.
- The extreme left perpetuates learned helplessness and dependency. The extreme left (and innumerable cowards of all political and social backgrounds), because they’re not working, have nothing better to do than engage in petty witch hunts on the mostly waste-of-time

otherwise known as social media. They do this to be self-aggrandizing all while ignoring their shortcomings they could be working to improve about themselves.

This is the most privileged class of people who have the luxury to flex anonymous keyboard disparagements because they’re not working when they could be. Here’s a nonconformist suggestion: How about putting down your cell phone and reading an actual book?

- The extreme left shuts down differing viewpoints and tries to censor anything they don’t happen to like.
- The extreme left suppresses the robust exchange of ideas and demonizes any intellectual inquiry that differs from their orthodoxy.
- The extreme left cancels, condemns, and dehumanizes anyone who asks honest questions that challenge their self-righteous narrow way. These are vestiges of the extreme right as well.
- The extreme left lionizes victimhood and believes everything happened to them,

rather than perhaps as a consequence of their behavior, choices, and actions.

- The extreme left makes excuses for criminals and refuses to hold them accountable while honest community citizens (and towns) suffer in the wake.
- The extreme left believes in coddling to the point where society becomes fragile and can’t learn to deal with difficult circumstances.
- When we as a society totally shield ourselves from tough experiences, we never learn to live with the hardships, we only learn to live in avoidance of them.
- The extreme left wants to excessively coddle everyone, which renders us unable to cope with any discomfort. This extreme Left coddling philosophy will not help us all become stronger, healthier humans in the long run.
- I can’t stand the extreme right or the extreme left.
- Is it too much to ask to have a moderate, healthy, and sensible middle ground?

Carbon footprint

FROM SECTION FRONT

—religious observance not required. Just rest.

Wouldn’t that be nice? Meanwhile, the Cloud now has a greater carbon footprint than the airline industry. Why does this make me feel better about getting on a plane?

Just as I’m now aware of the carbon footprint of building a road, I’m also aware that I’m

probably responsible for the carbon equivalent of an entire jetliner of fuel spewed into the atmosphere during the hours I’ve spent online arranging my flights, reserving a rental car, and booking places to stay.

I miss travel agents, but I am looking forward to being in the air for several hours — unplugged, reading a book.

VIEWPOINT

There is no going back once the trigger is pulled

Given the flaws that exist in our prevention systems, we need to reduce the danger that guns pose

Guilford
MANY GUN ADVOCATES say, “Guns don’t kill; it’s people who kill people.” They say that the problem with an epidemic of mass shootings in this country is a mental health issue, and that is not a reason to restrict gun ownership.

If we are being honest with ourselves, as a human being with some flaws that most of us have, at times we make bad decisions. In retrospect, we regret what we did and sometimes beat ourselves up for what we did. We sometimes can recover by offering a sincere apology and changing our behavior going forward. Life goes on and hopefully we learn something that will help us do better.

Guns, especially those that fire multiple shots quickly, can and do result in a devastating destruction of human life. There is no going back once the trigger is pulled. Apologies

MIKE SZOSTAK is a transformative justice advocate.

don’t work. Life does go on, but the scars that loved ones suffer alter their lives forever and another child or adult does not get to live out their life.

Most of us would probably not resort to shooting someone, even under duress. But as flawed human beings that we all are, we do not know for sure what would happen if we were pushed to the edge of our tolerance.

This is especially true if we are under the influence of drugs, especially alcohol — 85% of domestic violence incidents occur under the influence of alcohol. Most abusers later claim that that they regret their abusive actions and that the alcohol made them become abusive.

Despite their regrets, repeated behavior is likely. Put a gun in the hands of an abuser or in the hands of someone who feels they’ve been abused by others or a system, and tragedy occurs.

Yes, mental health issues are a major factor in mass shootings. Our country is falling far short in bringing forth sufficient resources to address this health crisis. Although screening gun purchasers will help, screening and testing systems are flawed.

GIVEN THE FLAWS that exist in our prevention systems, we need to reduce the danger that guns pose.

One way to reduce this danger is to eliminate guns that fire multiple rounds quickly — certainly not a perfect solution, but a step toward bringing sanity to reducing the tragedies occurring throughout our country.

Rapid-fire guns enable the killing of multiple people

quickly so in that sense, guns do indeed kill some people. As citizens, we do not need to own guns capable of firing more than a few rounds without reloading. Having such a law does not eliminate all gun-violent attacks, but it is a step forward in reducing harm.

Many powerful people are behind the manufacturing, sale, and ownership of assault weapons. Such legislation is not likely to occur in the near future because of the money influencing our elected officials.

Our real hope, at least in my lifetime, is for our president to issue an executive order — not an executive action! — to ban assault-type guns.

For a president to do so would take courage in the face of likely court challenges and probably a risk to personal safety. Let’s hope that courage and sanity prevail and that we elect a president will have these qualities.

Be Sure To Check Our Full Program Schedule @ brattleborotv.org

bc tv LOCAL PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS
June 12-18
CHANNEL 1078 CHANNEL 1079

PLEASE NOTE NEW CHANNEL NUMBERS!

Here We Are - Jamie Mohr, Epsilon Spikes, E.D. Mon 8p, Tues 12:45p, Wed 10:45a, Thurs 1:30p, Fri 9:30p, Sun 5:30p	Brattleboro Area Middle School - Move Up Day 2023. Wed 6p (LIVE)
The World Fusion Show - Ep # 154 - Christopher Adler. Tuesday 8p, Wed 11:30a, Sat 12:30p & 6:30p, Sun 9:30a	Brattleboro Union High School - Graduation 2023. Fri 6p (LIVE)
Around Town with Maria - Artful Streets at Gallery Walk. Mon 5:30p, Sat 5p, Sun 2:30p	Leland & Gray Graduation - 2023. Thurs 3:30p, Sat 8:30a, Sun 8:30p
1st Wednesdays Presents - We Are All Fast Food Workers Now: Annelise Orleck. Mon 6:30a, Tues 8:30p, Thurs 2p, Sat 8p	Guilford Selectboard Mtg. 6/12/23. Wed 7p, Thurs 8:30a, Fri 11:45a
Brooks Memorial Library - The Nethercott Duet. Thurs 9:15p, Fri 10a, Sat 2p, Sun 6p	Jamaica Selectboard Mtg. 6/12/23. Wed 9:30p, Thurs 6a, Fri 2:15p
Brattleboro Area Chamber of Commerce - Awards Soirée 6/1/23. Mon 12:45p, Tues 1p, Wed 9p, Fri 5p, Sun 4p	West River Education District Board Mtg. 6/12/23. Sun 6p
Guilford Broad Brook Grange - Guilford's One Room Schoolhouses 5/30/23. Mon 3p, Tues 10a, Wed 12:40p, Fri 12:45p	Townshend Selectboard Mtg. 6/13/23. Thurs 6p, Fri 8a, Sat 12p
Write Action - Poems Around Town Poetry Reading 4/28/23. Mon 12:5p, Tues 5a & 3:15p, Sun 7:45p	Windham Southeast School District Board Mtg. 6/13/23. Thurs 8:30p, Fri 5:30a, Sat 2:30p
Energy Week with George Harvey & Tom Fennell. Mon 9a, Tues 5p, Thurs 11a, Sat 7p	Dummerston Selectboard Mtg. 6/14/23. Fri 8p, Sat 6a, Sun 12p
Vermontitude - Weekly Episode. Tue 11:30a & 6:30p, Wed 6a, Thu 1p, Sat 12p, Sun 5p	Putney Selectboard Mtg. 6/14/23. Sat 6p, Sun 8:30a
WTSA News. Mon-Fri 12p & 6p	Windham Southeast Supervisory Union Board Mtg. 6/14/23. Sat 8:30p, Sun 6a
St. Michael's Episcopal Church - Weekly Service. Wed 2p, Sat 7:30a, Sun 11a	Brattleboro Selectboard Mtg. 6/6/23. Mon 6:15p, Tues 10, Wed 12p, Thurs 11:15a
Calvary Chapel of the West River Valley - Weekly Service. Tue 9a, Sat 5:30p, Sun 10a	Windham Central Supervisory Union Board Mtg. 5/31/23. Mon 9a, Tues 2p, Sun 3:45p
Trinity Lutheran Church - Weekly Service. Wed 10a, Thurs 7a, Sun 3p	Brattleboro Housing Partnerships Board Mtg. 5/22/23. Mon 10:15a, Tues 3:15p, Wed 4p
Guilford Community Church - Weekly Service. Wed 6:30a, Fri 8p, Sun 8a	Town Matters - Weekly Episode. Mon 6p, Wed 4:45p, Thurs 11a, Fri 11:30a, Sat 5p
St. Michael's Catholic Church Mass. Sat 4p (LIVE), Tue 6:45a & 2p, Thurs 8p	The David Pakman Show. Mon 8a, Tue 9a, Wed 5p, Fri 10:30a, Sun 5p

Note: Schedule subject to change.

View full schedule and watch online at **brattleborotv.org**

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Debt ceiling

FROM SECTION FRONT

who voted for the bill liked it.

But everybody who voted for it realized that their preferences and their philosophies — and even their standing with their constituents — mattered less than the global picture.

Defaulting on our debts would have struck a blow to economic and political security — ours, and pretty much everybody else’s, and that would have taken a long, long time to undo.

THERE’S STILL a lot of work to be done, of course.

Beginning, perhaps, with getting rid of the whole debt-ceiling fiasco by taking part of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution seriously: the part that reads, “The validity of the public debt of the United States, authorized by law, including debts incurred for payment of pensions and bounties

for services in suppressing insurrection or rebellion, shall not be questioned” should be taken at face value.

In the meantime, let’s remember how government is supposed to work.

Legislators are supposed to propose bills. Then other legislators are supposed to negotiate with them. Finally, legislators are supposed to vote on the bill, based on what they think is feasible and practical, although it may not be exactly what they want.

Let’s have more of this, please.

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Grace Cottage hosts community forum on new clinic

GRAFTON — Grace Cottage Hospital will unveil plans for their new primary care clinic building at a public forum on Thursday, June 15, at 4 p.m. at The Grafton Brick Meeting House, 2 Main St. All are welcome.

The current clinic operates out of two adjoining houses built in the 1850s. According to a news release, “with more than 31,000 patient visits annually (up from 20,000 in 2018), it is essential that Grace Cottage moves forward with this project in order to meet the current needs of the community and allow for future growth.”

Grace Cottage is embarking on a capital campaign for the construction of the new clinic building adjacent to the existing Grace Cottage Family Health.

“This project, fulfilling a long-held dream, has been initiated by generous donors who have pledged \$5 million toward the project,” according to the hospital.

Extensive feedback from employees who work in the clinic has been incorporated into the interior plan. Final exterior and interior designs have been completed for this new building, and these will be shared with community members at the June 15 event.”

For more information about the new clinic and the forum, call 802-365-9109 or email info@gracecottage.org.

Manitou offers deep woods nature immersion

WILLIAMSVILLE — The Manitou Project will be offering another series of nature immersion experiences this summer led by Amanda Kenyon, starting on Saturday, June 17, from 9:30 a.m. to noon.

This multi-sensory and mindful experience is a “unique, playful, and meditative approach to

deep relaxation and connection with the natural world,” say organizers. Inspired by the Japanese art of shinrin-yoku, “forest bathing,” participants will be guided through a sensory-awakening meditation and be offered a variety of invitations to explore the forest in new ways.

Accessible to all levels, this deep woods nature immersion includes short distances of walking, stops to explore, and periods of sitting in stillness. Lightweight, foldable stools are available for the sitting periods. The cost is \$35, and pre-registration is required. Go to landkindguide.com for more information.

Father’s Day Brunch served at Broad Brook Grange

GUILFORD — Broad Brook Grange will present its 23rd annual Father’s Day Brunch on Sunday, June 18, from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the Broad Brook Community Center, 3940 Guilford Center Rd.

This occasion follows the return of the Grange brunches with a Mother’s Day event in May, after a 4-year absence due to Covid and building renovation. The Community Center is now fully ADA-compliant, with handicapped parking spaces and ramp access to the dining room, with accessible restrooms.

The all-you-can-eat brunch features eggs — many of which are from Guilford — and omelettes, any style, made to order. Also on the menu are pancakes, French toast, sausage, bacon, and home fries, with Guilford maple syrup. Other treats include home-baked coffee cakes and other baked goods, fresh fruit salad, and bread for toasting. A selection of juices will be available, along with coffee, teas, and milk.

No reservations are necessary for the meal, which is priced at \$15 for adults; \$12 for seniors, and \$5 for ages 2–12. Kids under two are free. Cash or check welcome. For more information,

AROUND THE TOWNS

call 802-257-1961.

Free produce distribution

PUTNEY — The Vermont Foodbank and the Putney Foodshelf co-sponsor a monthly food drop of free produce and some nonperishables on the fourth Thursday of every month from 9 to 9:45 a.m. on Alice Holway Drive, in front of Putney Meadows — the white building across from the Putney Food Co-op and Putney Fire Station.

All are welcome. This is a drive-up service. Bags provided. The next monthly food drop is Thursday, June 22.

Brattleboro Savings & Loan ‘Shred Day’ is coming on June 24

BRATTLEBORO — Brattleboro Savings & Loan will

be having its annual “Shred Day” on Saturday, June 24, from 9 a.m. to noon at their main branch, 221 Main St. This is a free event in which the public is encouraged to bring their confidential and sensitive papers — such as old bank statements and canceled or unused checks — that need to be disposed of from this past year. Individuals can bring up to five boxes to be shredded and recycled.

This service is offered to help prevent local Vermonters from joining the 42 million Americans each year who fall prey to identity theft. In addition to the precautionary reasoning for Shred Day, the company who provides the mobile shred truck, SecurShred, will recycle all that paper — usually around 5,500 pounds—to be turned into tissues and other paper products by a U.S. paper mill.

Each year, at the end of Shred Day, SecurShred gives the bank

a check for the recycled paper that the bank then donates to a local charity. While Shred Day is a free service, BS&L welcomes donations that are then added to the funds SecurShred gives to the bank. This year, BS&L says it will be taking all the proceeds from this event, as well as other events throughout this coming year, to create a scholarship offered to local high school seniors who are involved in making our community better and brighter.

RFPL reading group takes up ‘Remarkably Bright Creatures’

BELLOWS FALLS — Interested readers may pick up a copy of the novel *Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Shelby Van Pelt at Rockingham Free Public Library’s front desk, then join the discussion on Thursday, July 20, at 6 p.m., on the library’s

main floor.

Van Pelt offers readers a “charming, witty, and compulsively enjoyable exploration of friendship, reckoning, and hope that traces a widow’s unlikely connection with a giant Pacific octopus,” say organizers. Popular author Kevin Wilson says, “*Remarkably Bright Creatures* is a beautiful examination of how loneliness can be transformed, cracked open, with the slightest touch from another living thing.”

This event is free and open to the public. For more information, visit rockinghamlibrary.org, email programming@rockinghamlibrary.org, call the library at 802-463-4270, or stop by the Library at 65 Westminster St.

LONDONDERRY

Mountain Towns Housing Project begins community fundraising campaign

LONDONDERRY — The Mountain Towns Housing Project (MTHP) says it is making great progress building the Bob Perry Lane House, an affordable, modest, single-family home off Hells Peak Road in Londonderry.

In partnership with the Windham & Windsor Housing Trust since January 2022, MTHP recently announced the start of Phase 2 of the project and the launch of a community fundraising campaign.

“The shell of the house is being installed now, and once installed, it will be a completely enclosed structure with windows, doors, and roof,” Paul Alcorn, chair of the MTHP Steering Committee, said in a news release.

With Phase 1 completed, Alcorn said MTHP is “now poised to take this project over the finish line with the goal to have a family in the home by the end of 2023. To that end, the selection committee is now accepting applications from interested families.”

MTHP Fundraising Committee chair Cynthia Gubb said approximately \$174,000 in cash gifts and \$270,000 in donated products and services has been donated so far.

“We now are moving to Phase 2 with the launch of our community campaign — raising an additional \$150,000 to finish the interior of the house and clapboard the exterior,” said Gubb. “We are excited with the progress and want to get to the goal quickly to keep the construction on track.”

The group anticipates this will take most of the summer and into the fall and will include both licensed trades people and volunteer labor. Those interested in participating in the volunteer build days are encouraged to sign up on the MTHP website at

mountaintownshousing.org.

Residents interested in purchasing this house will go through an application process as there are certain requirements and guidelines potential homeowners must meet. More information about the process, guidelines, income eligibility, and where to access an application are on the MTHP website mentioned above.

MTHP is building this house with the intent that it will be sold at an affordable price to a local individual, couple, or family who could not otherwise afford a home in this area. It is their hope that this first house is the start of a long-term vision of providing more affordable homeownership opportunities in our area.

To finish the interior, MTHP needs to purchase numerous building materials and supplies.

“Building supplies are expensive — that’s why it’s almost impossible to build an affordable home,” the group said. “A gift of \$25 will buy a five-gallon bucket of joint compound. \$250 will buy a quality toilet and \$500 will buy two. \$3,000 will cover the cost of drywall and \$5,000 would buy the interior doors. \$10,000 would provide all the flooring including tile, vinyl, and carpeting. \$15,000 would provide the clapboard siding and the stain needed to paint it.”

Those who would like to make a gift may send a check made payable to Mountain Towns Housing Project at P.O. Box 538, Londonderry, VT, 05148. Gifts can also be made online by visiting the website of the Second Congregational Church at secure.myvanco.com/YGY2/home and click on “Perry Lane Project.”

Questions can be directed to Paul Alcorn at palcorn@gmail.com or Cynthia Gubb at chgubb2020@gmail.com.

BRENDAN EMMETT QUIGLEY THE COMMONS CROSSWORD

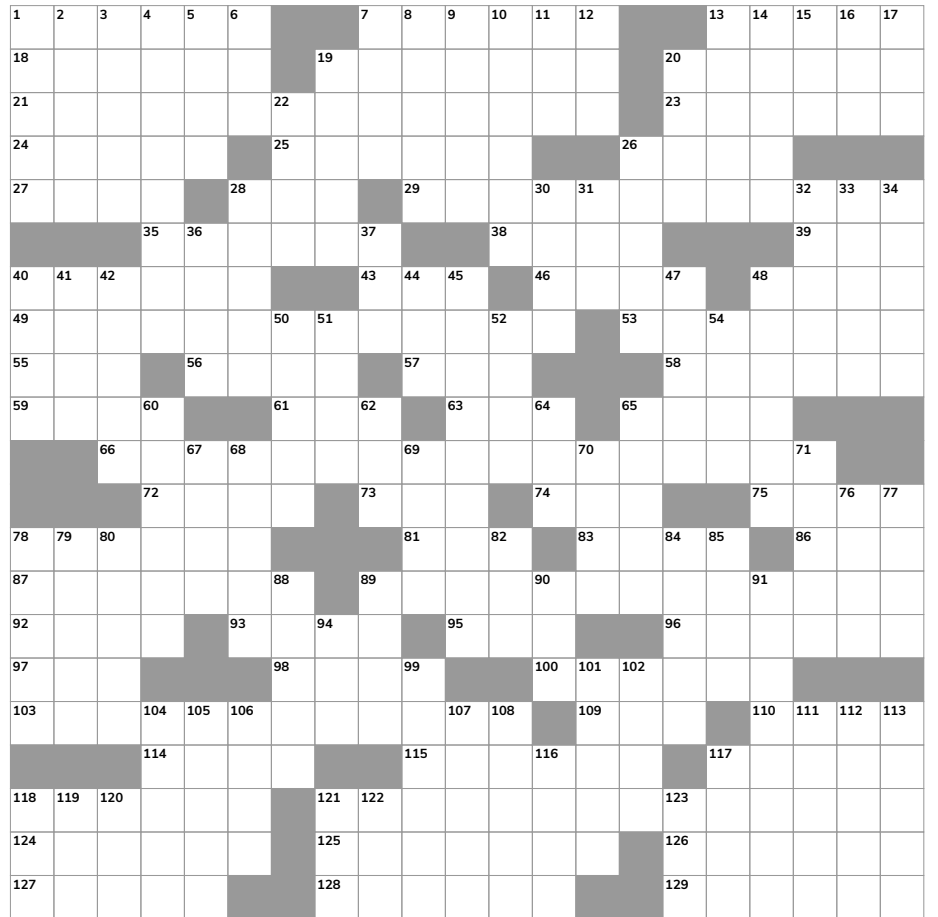
“Key Components”

Across

1. Low voices
7. Drinks enjoyed with a straw
13. Sexologist’s subject
18. More upset
19. Turns around, as an office chair
20. Crier’s cry
21. How to douse some fires?
23. Invested (with)
24. Follows the rules
25. “Game back on!”
26. Future race in an H.G. Wells novel
27. 100-meter race, e.g.
28. Big smash
29. Sunburned actress Anna?
35. Go by
38. Like stormy skies
39. Explosive letters
40. Offshore pumper
43. Strand in the lab
46. Little jokesters
48. Smoker’s prop
49. R&B singer Al gains?
53. Good bridge card holdings
55. Backstabber
56. “You’re not entirely wrong?”
57. Stun with a spell
58. Harsh dictator
59. Adjusted the treble, say
61. Argentine aunt
63. Coldness in the air
65. Thick masses of hair
66. Pioneering nobleman?
72. Swing a scythe
73. The other woman
74. ___ & Bradstreet
75. Hand over
78. American Revolution weapon
81. ___ Pérignon
83. Hold, as an opinion
86. Drag cover-up
87. “Simmer down, dude!”
89. Very small cervezas?
92. YA titan Blume
93. Entertainer McEntire
95. White wine aperitif
96. 100% reliable
97. Smeltery material
98. Stern or sullen
100. Unit pricing word
103. Infant who will stab you in the back?
109. A, abroad
110. They play well together
114. Pull down
115. Doing cobbler’s work
117. “Totes agree”
118. Composer Bach
121. “Don’t wait, dial already!”?
124. Some plaques
125. Well-___ (with a smooth shape)
126. Chef Lagasse
127. Gio of the US men’s national soccer teams
128. Collector’s goal
129. Is all over the place

Down

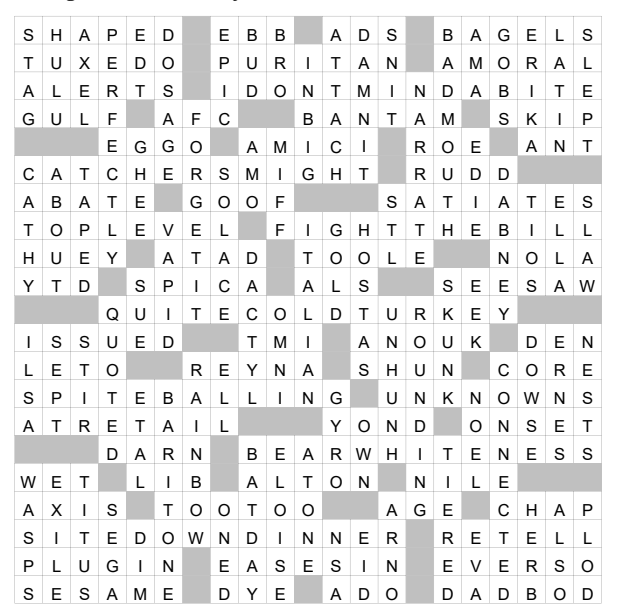
1. Two-legged support
2. Caribbean island
3. Completely fills up
4. “Don’t move”
5. Spawning, squirming fish
6. ___ Lankan
7. Do the butterfly stroke
8. Crisp, on the tube
9. To have, in Strasbourg
10. Saxophonist with one Grammy
11. NFL pundit Manning
12. Speedy flier, once
13. Salami option
14. London mayor Khan
15. Bean town skyscraper, for short
16. “___ Cómo Va”
17. “Ideas Worth Sharing” conference
19. Execs
20. ___ desk (IT station)
22. Wax collector
26. Pharaoh’s land
28. Van Halen’s second singer Sammy
30. Spring bloom
31. Subj. in the Pentagon Papers
32. City southeast of Rome
33. How calligraphers write
34. Demonstration of power, briefly
36. Fuzz in a dryer
37. MIT address ending
40. Fairy tale monster
41. Saudi Arabia neighbor
42. “I won’t stand in the way”
44. US wellness org.
45. Genre known for big shows with pyrotechnics
47. ___ Hall University
48. 3.26 light-years
50. Wild card?
51. King Charles’s mother, for short
52. Maze goal
54. Brooklyn force
60. In a sinister way
62. Camel droppings?
64. Deg. after a thesis defense
65. Actor Sal of “Exodus”
67. Spin around
68. Saudi Arabia neighbor



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Last issue’s solution

“Long and the Short of It”



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COLUMN | *Sports Roundup*

Rebels, Terriers fall in semifinals

Leland & Gray entered their Division IV softball semifinal on June 6 against top-seeded West Rutland confident about their chances of advancing to the championship game.

And when the fifth-seeded Rebels found themselves with a 4-2 lead over the defending state champions heading into the bottom of the fifth inning, it looked like that confidence was not misplaced.

By the end of the West Rutland fifth, the visiting Rebels were left dazed and wondering what had just hit them as the Golden Horde sent 17 batters to the plate, scored 13 runs, and ultimately cruised to a 22-6 victory.

That big fifth inning broke open what was a pitchers' duel between West Rutland's Aubrey Beaulieu and Leland & Gray's Kristen Lowe. But once the Coombs sisters, Arianna and Bella, started the inning off with back-to-back triples, everything unraveled for the Rebels.

Lowe didn't make it out of the fifth inning. Rebels coach Tammy Clausen replaced Lowe with reliever Hannah Greenwood, who fared no better as the Horde ended up with a total of 14 hits, including a three-hit day for Bella Coombs, while her sister Arianna drove in four runs.

Meanwhile, Beaulieu was throwing strikes and held the Rebels to just five hits. One of them was a three-run inside-the-park home run in the third inning by Molly Bingham.

It wasn't a bad year for the 13-7 Rebel girls, who were playing their first season in Division IV after dropping down from Division III.

With a championship in soccer and final four appearances in basketball and softball, it is a testament to the quality and character of the female athletes at Leland & Gray. Six of them who contributed to that record — Greenwood, Ainsley Meyer, Cat Shine, Makaila Morse, Savannah Cadrin, and Ruth Wright — are graduating.

It is also a testament to the leadership of athletic director and softball coach Tammy Clausen who, along with soccer

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

coach Joe Towle and basketball coach Terry Merrow, forged a successful season for the Rebel girls. Leland & Gray may be one of the smallest public high schools in Vermont, but it consistently fields competitive teams in every sport.

Solons top Rebels in Ultimate playoffs

- The Leland & Gray Ultimate disc team had a great season against southern Vermont teams, but had no answer against one of the best teams in the state as the Montpelier Solons cruised to a 15-5 victory on June 5 in Townshend.

Senior Trevor Stillwagon, the Rebels' leading scorer this season, had four of his team's five goals and had three blocks on defense. After Stillwagon's first goal, assisted by Jackson Fillion, cut the Solons' lead to 2-1, Montpelier scored four straight goals to take control of the game. Stillwagon broke the run with another goal assisted by Fillion to make it 6-2, but Montpelier scored twice more for a 8-2 halftime lead.

The Solons kept up the scoring pace in the second half as the Solons' fast-paced offense and deep bench wore down the Rebels. Trevor Hazelton got a goal, assisted by Fillion, early in the second half, but the Solons had a 10-3 lead by then. Stillwagon got his final two goals, assisted by Finch Holmes and Fillion, to finish the Rebels scoring.

Rebels coaches Joe Towle and Paul Paytas said after the game that Montpelier has a strong Ultimate program that starts in middle school and feeds a steady supply of players — enough for



Leland & Gray's Jackson Fillion, left, tries to block a shot by Montpelier's Forrest Holloway during their Ultimate disc state quarterfinal match on June 5 in Townshend.

separate boys' and girls' teams as well as a junior varsity squad.

The Rebels, who finished the season with a 9-3 record, have only one co-ed varsity team and it shared some of its players with the track & field program.

"We competed with them, but it's kind of an uphill battle when we only have one team and a low population to draw from," said Paytas. "It takes years to learn the flow of the game, to be able to see the whole field, to play with confidence."

Towle said his team played well against "arguably the best team in the state," and that the Rebels will definitely miss Stillwagon and fellow senior Icabaud Clarke. The good news is that they are the only graduating seniors. The rest of the team are expected back next season and will be ready to take the next step.

Oxbow clobbers BF in softball semis

- Bellows Falls knew they

were up against it when they faced the undefeated three-time state champion Oxbow Olympians in a Division III semifinal in Bradford on June 6.

Oxbow pitcher Anastase Bourgeois held the Terriers to four hits and struck out 19 batters over seven innings in a 17-1 victory. She also helped her cause going 3-for-4 at the plate with a home run.

The Olympians got 11 hits off losing pitcher Izzy Stoodley and stole eight bases. Bellows Falls finished its season with a 13-8 record.

Thetford blanks GM in baseball semis

- The third-seeded Thetford Panthers ended Green Mountain's playoff run with an 11-0 win in the Division III semifinals on June 6 in Chester.

Tanner Swisher took the loss for second-seeded GM, pitching one inning, while winning pitcher Xander Oshoniyi pitched five innings of one-hit ball for Thetford, with six strikeouts and one walk.

Oshoniyi had two hits, as did Thomas Amber, Dempsey McGovern, and Andrew Spooner; Amber drove in three runs and McGovern had two RBIs. Green Mountain finished the season with a 16-2 record.

Legion Baseball begins this week

- The American Legion Baseball season in Vermont gets started this week as Brattleboro Post 5 is scheduled to host Bennington Post 13 on June 13 at Tenney Field, and then has a doubleheader against Lakes Region on June 17 at Tenney Field, starting at 2 p.m.

Bellows Falls Post 37 opens its season with a doubleheader on June 17 against White River Junction Post 84 that starts at noon at Hadley Field.

While the 2023 season will open with seven teams in the Southern Division — Bellows Falls, Bennington, Brattleboro, Lakes Region, Manchester, Rutland, and White River Junction — the Northern Division is down to six teams.

With Barre Post 10 and S.D. Ireland dropping out, that leaves Colchester, Essex,

Addison County, Franklin County, Montpelier, and South Burlington in the Northern Division.

The state tournament will be held July 22-26 and be hosted by Lakes Region with Castleton University as the primary site for the games. Last season, Brattleboro took first place in the Southern Division and finished with a 15-6 record, while Bellows Falls, the third place team in the South, finished with a 12-9 record. Both Post 5 and Post 37 had early exits from last year's tournament as Essex Post 91 repeated as the state champs.

Soccer officials needed

- If you have an interest in officiating high school soccer in southern Vermont, a clinic for new officials will be held Saturday, Aug. 19 at the Old School Community Center, 1 School St., in Wilmington from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The cost of the clinic is \$50, which includes a rulebook and membership in the Vermont Soccer Officials Association through Dec. 31, 2023.

The clinic format will feature classroom instruction and on-field refereeing of a low-key scrimmage.

Pre-registration for the clinic is required. For more information, contact Eric Evans at eevansvtlax@gmail.com.

Call them the Brattleboro Bears

- When the Brattleboro Union High School sports teams take the field for the 2023-24 school year, they will be sporting a new nickname — the Bears.

It will take some time to get used to, but at least "Bears" fits nicely into a headline, will not offend anyone, and is a better choice than Bobcats or Badgers, the other two finalists that were considered for a new BUHS mascot.

While bobcats and badgers are rarely seen, bears do occasionally wander into Brattleboro. They are better known in these parts for raiding bird feeders, compost piles, and garbage cans than for their athletic prowess, although I've seen bears in at my house display some impressive feats of

strength as they ripped open trash receptacles.

Here's hoping the school comes up with a good logo to go with the new name.

Senior bowling roundup

- Week 6 of the spring/summer season of the Brattleboro Senior Bowling League at Brattleboro Bowl on June 8 saw Slo Movers (22-8) have a 4-1 week to move into first place while Five Pins (20-10) had a 5-0 week to move into a tie for second with Turkeys (also 20-10), who had a 1-4 week. No Splits (19-11) is in third place, followed by The Bowlers (17-13), Stayin' Alive (16.5-13.5), Skippers (13.5-16.5), Wrecking Crew (11-19) and High Rollers (9-21).

Vikki Butynski had the women's high handicap game (243), while Roberta Parsons had the high handicap series (656). Norm Corliss had the men's high handicap game (268) and series (678), while Slo Movers had the high team handicap game (869) and series (2,495).

Chuck Adams led the men's scratch scoring with a 660 series that featured games of 235, 215, and 210, while Robert Rigby had a 602 series with games of 236 and 191. John Walker had a 526 series with a 221 game, Gary Montgomery had a 521 series with a 198 game, Warren Corriveau Sr. had a 513 series with a 180 game, and Jerry Dunham had a 510 series. Other notable games included Stan Kolpa (201), Milt Sherman (195), and Corliss (189).

Carol Gloski had the women's high scratch series (448), while Butynski had the high scratch game (188). Gloski had games of 164 and 160, while Nancy Dalzell rolled a 161.

Sorry, wrong Glidden

- Brattleboro catcher Jayke Glidden wrote to me last week to point out that it was he, and not his brother Jolie, who hit a two-run homer in the 5-2 loss to Rice in the first round of the Division I high school baseball playoffs on May 30.

Far be it from me to rob someone of the glory of going deep, so consider this a belated correction to the record.



Leland & Gray's Trevor Stillwagon, left, moves in to defend as Montpelier's Cale Ellingson (center) takes a pass from a teammate during their Ultimate disc state quarterfinal match on June 5 in Townshend.

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