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BRATTLEBORO

Shelter manager's violent death leaves a community stunned



The violent death of Leah Rosin-Pritchard, 36, on April 3 has stunned a community that is no stranger to grief in recent months. Pritchard, the coordinator of Morningside House, shown here in a photo submitted to Tulane University School of Social Work for a website honoring her and other graduates of her master's degree program there.

Peers in shock and grief describe Leah Rosin-Pritchard, coordinator of Morningside House, as 'irreplaceable,' as her assailant, a client, is held without bail on a charge of first degree murder

The following news story — reported and written by Randolph T. Holhut, Robert F. Smith, and Jeff Potter of The Commons and Kevin O'Connor of VTDigger.org — contains short but graphic detail of a brutal killing in the paragraphs before the first subhead. We anticipate this fundamental part of the tragedy of this story will be difficult and upsetting for many readers — it was for us. Please read with care.

BRATTLEBORO—A resident of Morningside House shelter was held without bail after pleading not guilty to a first-degree murder charge in the gruesome April 3 death of the facility's coordinator, Leah Rosin-Pritchard. Zaina Asra Zakirah Mahvish-Jammeh, 38, was ordered Tuesday to receive a mental health evaluation. Prosecutors allege that she bought a hunting hatchet during the weekend and used it to take the life of Rosin-Pritchard, 36. "She is a danger to others and potentially to herself," Judge Katherine Hayes said of the defendant at a Windham District Court arraignment. Authorities initially deemed the homicide case as second-degree — intentional but unplanned — but upped the severity of the charge just before the hearing. "Police investigated

throughout the day and into the night," said Windham County State's Attorney Tracy Shriver. "As more facts were developed, I made the decision that first-degree murder was a more appropriate charge." The penalty for the charge is described in Tuesday's court filing as "imprisoned for life and for a presumptive minimum term of 35 years or life without the possibility of parole." According to an affidavit by Brattleboro Police Detective Sergeant Greg Eaton, the department received a call Monday morning about an assault in progress at the 30-bed Royal Road shelter, a short walk from downtown. Staffers said they had heard screaming before seeing Mahvish-Jammeh attack Rosin-Pritchard. Authorities said they found Rosin-Pritchard dead on the kitchen floor from injuries to

her face, neck, and torso. They discovered Mahvish-Jammeh in the nearby living room, "wiping blood off of her hands with a paper towel," according to the affidavit. Reviewing surveillance video, police said they saw Mahvish-Jammeh addressing the social worker while swinging a small ax that authorities learned had been purchased from a local hardware store on April 1. "The short conversation they had was very muffled and hard to hear," Eaton wrote in the affidavit, "but it was clear there was no argument before I could hear thudding and the screaming." Emergency medical responders pronounced the social worker dead at the scene. Local authorities and Vermont State Police's Crime Scene Search Team worked earlier Monday alongside Peter Elwell, a former Brattleboro town manager turned interim deputy executive director of the shelter's operator, Groundworks Collaborative. **Social work 'a second career'** Rosin-Pritchard lived most recently in Westminster West, **■ SEE ROSIN-PRITCHARD, A3**

Residents discuss long power loss, information vacuum in storm

Lawmakers get a message: If you were in Putney or Dummerston during the March snowstorm, you were sitting in the dark unable to find out what was going on

By Randolph T. Holhut
The Commons

PUTNEY—Having more and more information available online is great, until the power goes out and you live in a place where cell phone service is spotty to nonexistent. Switching homes to heat pumps to reduce carbon emissions is also great, until the power goes out and you have no way to heat your home.

These two points were highlighted by the March 13-15 snowstorm that blanketed parts of Windham County with as much as 3 feet of snow and left some households without electric power and telephone service for several days. State Rep. Mike Mrowicki, D-Putney, did what he could during the storm to help constituents, who had plenty of concerns about maintaining power and communications in extreme weather. Some of those concerns were aired during an online "listening session" that he convened on April 1. Mrowicki was joined by state Sen. Nader Hashim, D-Windham, who lives in Dummerston. **Storm 'was no surprise'** Mrowicki said that officials from Green Mountain Power told him that this snowstorm was a challenge, even though they had prepared for it by lining up extra line crews from across the U.S.



The recent Nor'easter dumped multiple feet of snow — more than 3 feet, in some places — in parts of Putney and Dummerston, the subject of a recent meeting by state Rep. Mike Mrowicki and state Sen. Nader Hashim, who live in and represent those towns.

and eastern Canada. "The first thing they said they had to do before they could fix any of the home hookups was to clear the power lines from the roads, and a lot of roads could not get plowed because there were 'hot' wires across them," he said. "That was the difference between this storm and others. It took so many power lines down across roads."

That said, Mrowicki pointed out that this snowstorm "was no surprise. It was predicted. We may have to look at whether [GMP] just needs more capacity instead of having to rely on crews from Kentucky and Oklahoma." Suzanne Weinberg, who lives on Camp Arden Road in Dummerston, said she was out of power for four days and three

Fired principal says he was 'sacrificial lamb' for past abuse

Perrin lawsuit asserts that 'God Almighty himself' couldn't have swayed the board from firing him from BUHS

By Virginia Ray
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—Ousted Brattleboro Union High School (BUHS) Principal Steven Perrin alleges that the board used him as a "scapegoat" and "sacrificial lamb" after learning of abuse by past teachers in the district, specifically Robert "Zeke" Hecker. In his lawsuit against the Windham Southeast Supervisory Union (WSESU) and Windham Southeast School District (WSESU) boards, Perrin, who is represented by Theodore Kramer, claims that his "termination can only be explained as the Board's decision to scapegoat Plaintiff in light of vocal public pressure regarding accusations of inappropriate sexual behavior against a former teacher that

had gone unheeded for years." "There is no other logical explanation for the summary termination of a highly regarded principal," he says. The March 21 filing names the two entities as well as board members at the time of Perrin's firing and subsequent hearing to appeal that action, which took place over six sessions in January. Those defendants are Liz Adams, Anne Beckman, Lana Dever, Michelle Luetjen Green, Emily Murphy Kaur, Tim Maciel, Robin Morgan, Shaun Murphy, Deborah Stanford, and Kelly Young. In the civil complaint, Perrin requests a jury trial and financial remuneration for wrongful termination, breach of contract, defamation, denial of due process, and intentional **■ SEE PERRIN LAWSUIT, A6**

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

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

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

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

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Alan O. Dann, Judy Gorman,
Mia Gannon

Bellows Falls teen recognized for 'heroism and decisive action'

Alex Leonard, a new fourth-generation firefighter, receives a legislative resolution praising his calm actions during a fire at his home in January

By Robert F. Smith
The Commons

BELLOWS FALLS—Alexander Leonard is 18 and a senior at Bellows Falls Union High School. On Feb. 10, he was recognized in a resolution passed by both the Vermont House and Senate for "his heroism and decisive action" for his response to a fire in his family home when he was just 17.

His response to that fire was something Leonard had been training for. He recently finished a one-year trial period as a volunteer with the Rockingham Fire Department, at the end of which he was voted in as a full-time firefighter.

A student/athlete in the BFUHS Work Based Program, Leonard spends part of his day in the classroom and part of it at a job. In his case, it is at J&M Auto in Bellows Falls, where he is learning auto mechanics and working with the firm's towing service.

Dealing with the Jan. 17 fire in his home came at the end of a long day for Leonard.

Late that evening, he had been out in a ride-along in one of the company's tow trucks, responding to an auto accident. He didn't get home to his house on Center Street until around 11 p.m.

"I pulled in the driveway and I could hear a smoke detector going off," Leonard said. "When I got to the door of my house, I found the smoke alarm was mine."

Leonard said that his parents had also just been alerted by the detector and were awake and starting to get up. He said when he got in the house he ran up the stairs toward where the detector was going off.

"I saw there was a fire in one of the rooms," he said. "I ran back downstairs and got a fire extinguisher and told my parents to call 911."

When he got back upstairs the smoke was so thick he had trouble breathing, and he realized quickly that he wouldn't be able to put the fire out with the extinguisher. He closed the upstairs doors in order to confine the fire and starve it of oxygen, then went back downstairs to help his parents.

"My dad was a firefighter," Leonard said, "and he also knew that that would help choke the fire out."

There was another immediate concern. His father has multiple sclerosis and is unable to get around without the aid of a wheelchair or walker, and he needed to get out of the house.

"We put him in a wheelchair and got him out the front door," Leonard said, "just as the Golden Cross ambulance got there and a BF police officer showed up."

In the resolution, Leonard is credited with "expertly" aiding the emergency workers in getting his father safely out of the house with calmness and composure under intense stress and pressure. Everyone got out of the house without incident.

There was severe smoke damage, and the second floor of the house was considered a loss. But choking the fire down by closing it off confined it to one room and saved the rest of the house.

Fire and smoke cleanup, and an eventual rebuild of the second floor, will keep the family in the home they have been in since 2007.

In his blood

The joint resolution was adopted by both legislative bodies on Feb. 10 and read on the floor of the Legislature on Feb. 23. The House resolution was presented by Rep. Leslie Goldman, D-Bellows Falls, Rep. Michelle Bos-Lun, D-Westminster, and Wendy Harrison and Nader Hashim, both senators from Windham County.



Robert F. Smith/The Commons
Alex Leonard, a senior at Bellows Falls Union High School, was honored by the Vermont Legislature for what they called "his heroism and decisive action" responding to a fire in his family home earlier this year.

"Leonard's quick action," the resolution says, "which Bellows Falls Fire Chief Shaun McGinnis praised, saved his family's home and prevented a far greater tragedy from occurring, and his family is extremely proud of this fourth-generation firefighter."

It was also resolved "that the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to Alex Leonard, to Rockingham Fire Chief Kevin Kingsbury, and to Bellows Falls Fire Chief Shaun McGinnis."

Firefighting may be in Leonard's blood, and it is certainly a part of his family's legacy. "His great-grandfather is a founding member of the Rockingham fire department," said Jimmy Smith, owner of J&M Auto and a longtime local firefighter. "The family has served all around this community," Smith added. "His great-grandfather, grandfather, father, and Alex. There is a whole history of community service there."

Leonard also has an uncle who is a fire captain in Portland, Maine. He said that firefighting is going to be a part of his future. After graduation this June, he is going to firefighting school in Maine. He said his immediate goal is to get his Firefighter I and Firefighter II certifications. Beyond that he said, he would like to become an EMT, and perhaps, down the road, take on the challenge of getting his certification as a paramedic. When asked about how he felt about the resolution and being called a hero, Leonard shrugs and chuckles. "Honestly," he said, "I closed the doors and I got my dad out."

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Rosin-Pritchard

FROM SECTION FRONT

where she and Alexander Margolies purchased a home in 2022, the town's property records show.

According to Rosin-Pritchard's public-facing LinkedIn profile, she has worked for Groundworks for one year, seven months. For the first year, she worked as the agency's sole housing case manager, and she has coordinated the Morningside shelter since October 2022.

Social work was a second career for Rosin-Pritchard, who described herself as a "former baker, coach, and entrepreneur."

With a bachelor's degree in social work from Rhode Island College, she was a graduate of Tulane University School of Social Work's Master of Social Work program, earning a degree in 2020 with a focus on disaster and collective trauma.

While there she worked with youth in a training program in culinary arts, connecting young clients with "food benefits, health insurance, primary care, child care, and transportation, as well as involvement and support in day to day classroom setting."

"Leah Rosin-Pritchard is irreplaceable," Groundworks Communication Director Libby Bennett said in a news release.

Bennett described Rosin-Pritchard as "a wonderfully strong, positive, beautiful, and compassionate person who gave generously of her spirit and skills in support of all Morningside House residents and her professional colleagues."

"There are no words to express the depth of loss felt by her Groundworks teammates and our hearts go out to her family and friends," she said.

Bennett added that "we can unequivocally say that Groundworks will not be the same without Leah. Our staff and our program participants are grieving. We are, at the same time, personally and organizationally impacted, and we are focused on supporting each other while continuing to provide food, shelter, and supportive services to people who need us."

A difficult balance

"There's a wish we have when the unthinkable and tragic happens like this, to find a simple answer," said Kurt White, the Brattleboro Retreat's vice-president of outpatient programs. "But this is not really that kind of thing. These are complicated and complex problems, and there are not simple answers."

White said that he and

Groundworks Executive Director Josh Davis began talking as far back as 2014 about how to address the mental health needs of people using the shelter system in Brattleboro.

"We weren't sure what it would look like, and the idea evolved over time," said White, a clinical social worker who has worked at the Retreat for over 17 years.

The idea was to pool the resources of the Retreat, Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, Health Care & Rehabilitative Services (HCRS), and Groundworks to provide easy access to services for a variety of reasons — homelessness, lack of primary medical care, mental health issues, substance use problems — and acknowledged the fact that many people would be dealing with several of these issues at the same time.

"Things are actually getting more serious," White said. "With mental health, physical health problems, substance abuse, domestic violence, and other factors, there are always a variety of complex issues."

The program evolved into Healthworks, an active partnership of all four agencies.

"Healthworks is about a year old, and it's a community partnership meant to support people with unstable housing, serious mental illness, and perhaps physical issues as well," said Dr. Karl Jeffries, Chief Medical Officer at the Retreat. "It is a program to coordinate our work with people who use a lot of our resources. It's a form of assertive community therapy, that is, going out and working with people in the community who need these services instead of waiting for them to come to us."

White said the four agencies wanted to coordinate their efforts to a greater degree, "so we formed an LLC to formally work together. That enabled us to apply for and get grants and other funding."

"That all has fallen together in just the last few months," he continued. "This is a very intensive level of services. All the agencies are involved with this at a very high level."

That includes regular meetings with staff at all levels, including administrative, White said. "We want to meet the unmet needs of people in our community with high needs, including homelessness."

Regarding the urge to blame this event on mental health problems, White had some interesting thoughts.

Police identify victim in Brattleboro shooting

Death of Connecticut man ruled a homicide; VSP describes shooting as 'targeted act'

By Randolph T. Holhut
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—Vermont State Police are investigating a fatal March 30 shooting at on Birge Street.

Tamico Williams, 21, of Hartford, Connecticut, died of gunshot wounds to the torso and the manner of death was a homicide, according to an autopsy completed on April 1 by the Vermont Chief Medical Examiner's Office in Burlington.

According to Brattleboro Police, the department received a 911 call shortly before 8 p.m. reporting the sound of gunfire at a residence at 14 Birge St.

Responding to the call, officers found Williams dead inside an apartment and requested assistance from the Vermont State Police's Crime Scene

Search Team and Narcotics Investigation Unit, which arrived the next morning to take over the investigation.

"The investigation into this homicide is continuing, and no one is currently in custody," state police said in an April 1 news release. "Information that detectives have developed so far indicates the shooting appears to be a targeted act."

During a March 31 news conference at Brattleboro Police headquarters, Vermont State Police Capt. Scott Dunlap asked the public "if they saw anything in that area last night to please reach out to us or the Brattleboro Police Department."

"If anybody was in the area and saw a vehicle speed away or anything like that — something that may not seem like much, but that could help us out a lot,"

he said. Dunlap also raised the scenario of people encountering someone who they believe might have been involved in the shooting.

In that situation, people should not approach that person and instead contact the police, he warned.

The Harold Tier apartment building at 14 Birge St. is listed as belonging to PE 2 Housing Limited Partnership. The registered agent for the partnership is the Windham & Windsor Housing Trust (WWHT).

In a WWHT news release on March 31, representatives of the nonprofit organization wrote that "our immediate concern is for the safety and well-being of our residents and neighbors who live in our community."

"We are cooperating fully

with the Brattleboro Police Department and the Vermont State Police on their ongoing investigation of this incident, and we thank all of the responders who work to keep our community safe each day. The Housing Trust reaffirms our commitment to safely housing and serving Windham and Windsor county residents, especially at this time when, more than ever, our services and resources are so desperately needed."

Anyone with information about this case is asked to contact the Vermont State Police in Westminster at 802-722-4600, or to leave an anonymous tip online at vsp.vermont.gov/tipbusmit.

With additional reporting by Kevin O'Connor of VT Digger.org

"We can't make sense of actions like this, especially at first. Yet we rarely find any kind of simple answer," he said. "There are multiple and complicated causes of homelessness in our community."

Jeffries agreed. "The largest majority of those with mental illness are not violent. Research has shown that the largest percentage of violence is from people who are not dealing with mental health issues," he said. "It's certainly a misconception in the community that the two are linked. That contributes to the stigma that people faced with mental health issues have to deal with every day."

Selectboard chair thanks multiple agencies

Rosin-Pritchard's death is the fourth killing in Brattleboro in the past year, following a July 2022 shooting on Elliot Street, an August 2022 killing on Putney Road, and a March 30 homicide on Birge Street [story, this issue] remains under investigation.

Brattleboro Selectboard Chair Ian Goodnow devoted his chair's remarks at the April 4 meeting to the two recent deaths.

He called the aftermath of

those killings "a very traumatic experience for many people in our community, your neighbors, staff at local nonprofits, town staff — including our police and fire officers — and specifically truly tragic for those people and families directly involved."

He expressed his hope "that we can keep working together with resilience and continuing in continuous improvement for a future where these types of deaths no longer happening in our community."

The chair acknowledged the Vermont State Police and Major Crimes Unit and the Vermont State Police Crime Scene Search Team, calling their assistance on both crimes "invaluable."

He thanked the town police officers and detectives, evidence technician, and a social worker who "responded to a difficult incident yesterday, helping both the staff and residents of this facility as they worked through this immense tragedy."

"I just want to thank them for their compassion and support that they have shown for all the individuals involved in both of these traumatic events that have occurred in the last week," Goodnow said.

A neighbor's view

For approximately 35 years, Carol Aydelotte has lived in Morningside Commons, a condominium complex, also on Royal Road.

"Everyone up here is shocked," she said.

Aydelotte said that over the years, though not much recently, she has interacted with the shelter as a neighbor, an ally, and a donor of goods and services.

As a restaurant owner in town, she has hired residents of the shelter — like one young man who "turned out to be one of the best workers," she said. And as the executive chef at Landmark College in Putney, she has connected the college with the nonprofit and helped organize meals to benefit the shelter. She's donated furniture.

Grace Cottage Hospital recognized as 'age-friendly'

TOWNSHEND—Grace Cottage Hospital has joined a nationwide initiative to improve health care specifically for older adults.

The Age-Friendly Health Systems Initiative is helping hospitals and other care settings implement a set of evidence-based interventions specifically designed to improve care for older adults.

In its letter congratulating Grace Cottage Hospital for its Age-Friendly Level 2 recognition, the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) calls Grace Cottage Hospital "a leader in this rapidly growing movement committed to care of older adults."

Grace Cottage is the only Vermont hospital that has achieved this recognition. Both Grace Cottage Family Health and Grace Cottage Hospital join 909 facilities nationally who have achieved the more advanced Level 2 recognition, Committed to Care Excellence.

"This model truly ensures that our multidisciplinary team is setting goals for our patients by looking through the lens of what matters to the individual," Grace Cottage Chief Nursing Officer Lisa Eaton said in a news release.

The IHI designation is based on a review of Grace Cottage's patient care in four main areas, what the IHI calls the 4Ms: What Matters, Medication, Mentation, and Mobility.

Grace Cottage Hospital has proven it provides patient-centered care, guided by what is most important to the individual patient (What Matters).

It also aims to prevent, identify, treat, and manage dementia, depression, and delirium (Mentation), and to encourage older adults to move safely every day (Mobility). When medication (the 4th M) is necessary, Grace Cottage Hospital providers choose medicines and dosages with the least impact on the other 3Ms.

The "Age-Friendly" designation is an initiative of The John A. Hartford Foundation and IHI, in partnership with the American Hospital Association and the Catholic Health Association of the U.S. The aim is to provide guidance and recognition for healthcare institutions seeking to provide the best age-friendly care for older adults.

Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital includes a 19-bed

hospital and ER, a primary care clinic, full-service lab and radiology, and both inpatient and outpatient physical and occupational therapy.

Grace Cottage's Messenger Valley Pharmacy is open to the public and located across the street from the hospital. For more information, visit gracecottage.org or call 802-365-7357.



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NOTICE OF APPLICATION TO BROWNFIELDS REUSE AND ENVIRONMENTAL LIABILITY LIMITATION ACT PROGRAM

Please take notice that The Winston Prouty Center, whose mailing address is 209 Austine Drive Brattleboro, VT 05301, is applying to the Vermont Brownfields Reuse and Environmental Liability Limitation Program (10 V.S.A. §6641 et seq.) in connection with the redevelopment of property known as the Winston Prouty Campus in the Town of Brattleboro. A copy of the application, which contains a preliminary environmental assessment and a description of the proposed redevelopment project, is available for public review at the Town Clerk's Office and at the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation offices in Montpelier.

Comments concerning the application and/or the above referenced documents may be directed to Lisa Whitney, Director of Campus Operations at (802) 257-7852 x302 or at lisa@winstonprouty.org. Comments may also be submitted by mail to the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, Waste Management Division, 1 National Life Drive - Davis 1, Montpelier, VT 05620.

TOWN OF PUTNEY, VERMONT LAWN MOWING/TRIMMING & CLEANUP SERVICES BID REQUEST

The Town of Putney is seeking bids for a two-year contract for the mowing/trimming and spring/fall cleanup services for town properties. A list of properties, bid details and required bid form can be found on the municipal website: www.putneyvt.org under notices or can be sent to you upon request.

Please submit sealed bid to the Town of Putney, PO Box 233, Putney, VT 05346, no later than 4:00 pm on April 27, 2023. Please mark bid "Town Properties Mowing/Trimming & Cleanup Bid Proposal." Bids will be reviewed and awarded upon final approval of the Selectboard on May 3, 2023.

If you have any questions, please contact Karen Astley, Putney Town Manager at (802) 387-5862 x11 or email Manager@putneyvt.org.

TOWN OF PUTNEY, VERMONT LAWN MOWING/TRIMMING & CLEANUP BID REQUEST

The Town of Putney is seeking bids for a two-year contract for the mowing of town cemeteries. A list of cemeteries, bid details and required bid form can be found on the municipal website: www.putneyvt.org under notices or can be sent to you upon request.

Please submit sealed bid to the Town of Putney, PO Box 233, Putney, VT 05346, no later than 4:00 pm on April 27, 2023. Please mark bid "Town Cemetery Mowing/Trimming & Cleanup Bid Proposal." Bids will be reviewed and awarded upon final approval of the Selectboard on May 3, 2023.

If you have any questions or would like to request bid documents, please contact Karen Astley, Putney Town Manager at (802) 387-5862 x11 or email Manager@putneyvt.org.

TOWN OF PUTNEY, VERMONT AUDITING SERVICES REQUEST FOR BID PROPOSAL

The Town of Putney is seeking bids for a three-year contract for auditing services. Request for proposal details can be found on the municipal website: www.putneyvt.org under notices or can be sent to you upon request.

Please submit sealed proposal with bid to the Town of Putney, PO Box 233, Putney, VT 05346, no later than 4:00 pm on April 27, 2023. Please mark "Putney Auditing Services Bid Proposal." Proposals will be reviewed and awarded upon final approval of the Selectboard at the May 3, 2023 meeting.

If you have any questions, please contact Karen Astley, Putney Town Manager at (802) 387-5862 x11 or email Manager@putneyvt.org.

MILESTONES

Births, deaths, and news of people from Windham County

Obituaries



• **Susan Marie Briggs, 64**, of Hinsdale, New Hampshire. Died March 24, 2023 at Dartmouth-Hitchcock

Medical Center in Lebanon, N.H., following a courageous third battle with cancer. Susan was born in Greenfield, Massachusetts on Jan. 29, 1959, the daughter of Herbert and Theresa (Pratt) Day. She was raised and educated in Greenfield public schools, graduating from Greenfield High School with the Class of 1977. She went on to attend the Thompson School for Practical Nursing in Brattleboro, where she received her LPN diploma and license. She was a dedicated and compassionate caregiver and took great pride in her patients' care while she was employed at Cheshire Medical Center/Dartmouth-Hitchcock in Keene, New Hampshire. Previously, Susan was employed at Eden Park Nursing Home in Brattleboro and at Vernon Green Nursing Home. She enjoyed fishing, including deep sea fishing, as well as crafting, painting with water colors, crocheting, and vacations spent at one of her favorite destinations, Universal Studios in Orlando. On April 1, 2000, in Brattleboro, she

married Randy Briggs, who survives her. Besides her devoted husband of almost 23 years, she leaves a stepson, Kyle Briggs of Claremont, New Hampshire; a stepdaughter, Lindsay Weld of Cornish, New Hampshire; one brother, David Day of Greenfield, and three grandchildren and four nephews. Additionally, she leaves her best friend Carlene Momaney of Hinsdale, and her beloved cat, "Buster." She was predeceased by her parents and two sisters, Linda Day McCarthy and Lori Phelps. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: In keeping with Susan's final wishes, there are no formal funeral services scheduled. A celebration of her life will be held at VFW Post 4234 in Hinsdale on April 29 from noon to 3 p.m. She will later be laid to rest in the family lot in Green River Cemetery in Greenfield. Donations to the Windham County Humane Society, P.O. Box 397, Brattleboro, VT 05302. To share a memory or send condolences to her family, visit atamaniuk.com.



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

59 years. Marguerite worked at Shelbourne Shirt for 41 years, retiring as a floor supervisor. She spent the last eight years experiencing life in Vermont with her daughter Diane and her husband Eugene. Marguerite was always open for a road trip and was a true foodie at heart who also enjoyed playing bingo. She is survived by her children: Catherine A. Augustine (husband Robert), Jo-Ann M. Preble (husband Kenneth), Diane Wrinn (husband Eugene), and Eric D. Madonna (wife Janice); daughter-in-law Carissa Madonna; seven grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren, one great-great-grandchild, and many nieces and nephews. She was also the mother of the late David B. Madonna and sister of the late Arthur and Leo LeComte, Lydia St. Yves, Sister Mary Theresa Madonna, Irene Casey, Germaine Fortier, Elizabeth Bougie, and Georgette Quintin. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A funeral Mass was held March 1 at St. Mary's Cathedral in Fall River, with burial in St. Patrick's Cemetery. To express condolences to the family, visit hathawayfunerals.com.

• **Marjorie D. "Marj" Paquette, 87**, of West Brattleboro. Died unexpectedly at her home on March 28, 2023. Marjorie was born in Richford on Aug. 21, 1935, the daughter of Leslie and Beatrice (Ryea) McAllister. She was raised and

educated in Richford where she attended public schools. She was the wife of Duyane John Paquette, who predeceased her on July 23, 1980. She worked several jobs throughout the years, but considered herself a devoted homemaker whose life centered around her family which meant the world to her. Marjorie was a member of the American Legion Post 5 Auxiliary and the VFW Carl M. Dessaint Post 1034 Auxiliary. A woman of faith, she attended First United Methodist Church in Brattleboro, where she was baptized into the faith. Of her pastimes and interests, she enjoyed gardening, traveling, crocheting, playing Bingo, and time spent with her family. Survivors include her four children David and his wife Cathy of Vernon, Steven of West Brattleboro, Rose Paquette Ashworth and her husband David of West Chesterfield, New Hampshire, and Pamela Gleason of Brattleboro; one brother, Norman McAllister of Derby; and 12 grandchildren and 15 great grandchildren. Additionally, she leaves many nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews. She was predeceased by a son, Robert Paquette; brothers Maynard, Garnold, Morton and Everett McAllister; and a sister, Virginia McAllister. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A service in celebration of her life will be held at a future date and time to be announced. Marjorie will be laid to rest beside her beloved husband in the family lot in North Cemetery in Vernon. Donations to the Windham County Humane Society, P.O. Box 397, Brattleboro,

VT 05302. To send condolences, visit atamaniuk.com.



• **Clarice King Short, 89**, of East Dummerston. Died peacefully in the comfort of her home with her family on March 24, 2023.

Clarice was born in Meriden, New Hampshire on Oct. 29, 1933, the daughter of Ronald and Martha (Chowanec) King. Clarice was one of fourteen children. She graduated from Brattleboro High School in 1952. She attended Green Mountain Chapel in Brattleboro and that is where she met the love of her life, Howard Short. Clarice and Howard were married on Oct. 2, 1954. They had a very full life together of more than 66 years. Clarice was a loving wife, mother, grandmother, great grandmother, sister and friend. Clarice and her husband made a great team. They were very active in church their entire lives together. Her personal relationship with Jesus was most important to her. Clarice attended Windham Community Chapel in Dummerston for the last 34 years, as well as Venice Bible Church during their winters in Venice, Florida. Clarice was the bookkeeper for her husband's plumbing and heating business for about 20 years. She worked alongside her husband as they bought and sold property and, in the late 1980s, built Hidden Acres Campground and managed that together. Clarice enjoyed working in the office of the campground and building

relationships with the campers. Clarice loved serving her family, she was always making a delicious meal or baking some homemade goodies. She was known for her quick wit and efficiency. Spending time with her family brought her the greatest joy. She is survived by her four children: Sandy Mowrey and her husband Kevin of Williamsville, Terry Short of Dummerston, Keith Short and his wife Tammy of Dummerston, and Karen Gilbert and her husband William of Vernon; siblings Frances Brochu of Connecticut, Norma Ives of Vernon, Alton King of Putney, Dolores Sylvester and her husband Reginald of Dummerston, Cheryl Aplin of Brattleboro, Randall King and his wife Diana of Vernon, and many nieces and nephews. Clarice was blessed with 14 grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren. She was predeceased by her husband, her son Bradley Steven Short, her granddaughter Leah Short, her grandson Lincoln Short, her brothers Reginald, Raymond, Fred, and Dennis King, and her sisters Joyce Keeler, Darlene Hutchins, and Sheila Lawrence. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A memorial service was held April 2 at Grace Community Church in Spofford, New Hampshire. Donations to Windham Community Chapel, 850 US Route 5, Dummerston, VT 05301, or Shriners Children's Hospital, 516 Carew St, Springfield, MA 01104. To share a memory or send condolences to Clarice's family, visit atamaniuk.com.

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.

AROUND THE TOWNS

Town seeks volunteers for boards

BRATTLEBORO — The town is looking for citizens to serve on the following committees and boards: ADA Committee; Arts Committee; Citizen Police Communications Committee (CPC); Design Review Board (Alternate); Development Review Board (Member and an Alternate); Fence Viewers; Honor Roll; Inspector of Lumber, Shingles & Wood; Planning Commission; Senior Solutions; and Weigher of Coal. Applications and more information about various committees

and boards can be found at brattleboro.org, or by calling the Town Manager's office at 802-251-8151. Interested Brattleboro residents may submit applications online, or send the application by email to the Town Manager's office — jtsticklor@brattleboro.org — or mail it to: Brattleboro Town Manager's Office, Attn: Committee Vacancy, 230 Main St., Suite 208, Brattleboro, VT 05301.

RFPL hosts Poetry Open Mic night

BELLOWS FALLS — The Rockingham Free Public Library

is hosting a Poetry Open Mic on Friday, April 7, at 6 p.m. Participants are invited to read original poetry or favorite poems by another poet. All ages are welcome to participate or be a part of the audience to support these brave souls.

This event is free and open to the public. For more information, go to rockinghamlibrary.org or call 802-463-4270.

Introduction to gardening classes offered at Kindle Farm School

TOWNSHEND — New gardeners as well as those wishing to learn more about gardening are invited to join Toni Kessler, the vocational educator and farm manager at Kindle Farm School on Saturday, April 8, and Saturday, May 13, from 10 a.m. to noon, for a fun and hands-on class.

Participants will meet in the greenhouse to explore many topics like seeding, transplanting, and soil, and you will be able to take home plants for your own garden. Each class is \$75, or \$125 for both. Cash or check only. Space is limited. To sign up, email meakessler@kindlefarm.org.

This is a fundraiser for Kindle Farm School Vocational Programming, which provides students opportunities to gain employment skills in a variety of careers, including farming, forestry, and culinary arts. It also provides a CSA bag full of fresh produce from the Kindle Farm

gardens each week over the summer and fall months.

Easter Hunt at Guilford Community Park on April 8

GUILFORD — The Guilford Community Church is sponsoring a free Easter Hunt at the new community park on Saturday, April 8, at 3 p.m. for children ages 3-13, rain or shine. The hope is that this becomes an annual event, as well as an opportunity to enjoy the new park with family, friends, and neighbors.

According to organizers, the Easter Bunny will be hiding treasures of toys and treats throughout the park, with children then hunting for them among the tulips, under the new timber-built pavilion, around the Labyrinth, in the grass, and on the children's play equipment. In case of inclement weather, the hunt will move into the church's Zeller Hall under the sanctuary.

Parents are asked to pre-register their children by calling Robin Davis at 802-380-0994 before noon on Friday, April 7, so that there will be enough toys for all participating. Each treasure hunter will receive an individualized clue based on age prior to the noncompetitive hunt. Children do not need to bring baskets or containers and do not need to be residents of Guilford.

Light refreshments will be for sale to help support the relaunch of the church's youth and family programs, including Sunday school classes and an interfaith youth group offering

community service projects and trips for teens. For information, please contact Davis (a.k.a., Ms. Bunny) at 802-380-0994 or email guilfordchurch@gmail.com.

Senior meal served

DUMMERSTON — Senior Solutions and Evening Star Grange will present their next Senior Lunch at noon on Wednesday, April 12, at the Grange Hall in Dummerston Center. The menu includes pulled pork on a bun or vegetarian lentil sloppy joes, homemade baked beans, and potato salad, with fruit cobbler for dessert.

Reservations for the meal are strongly encouraged and can be made by calling 802-254-1138 and leaving name, telephone number, the number of meals required, and whether you are picking up or eating inside. Please call by 5 p.m. on April 11 if possible, so that they can be sure to prepare enough food. This meal is open to everyone, with a suggested donation of \$3 for those 60 and over and \$4 for the younger attendees.

Rec. Dept. begins sign-ups for Summer Day Camp

BRATTLEBORO — The Brattleboro Recreation & Parks Department has begun accepting registration for their Summer Day Camp.

The weeks of camp will be as follows: Week 1: June 19-23 (limited space available), Week 2: June 26-30 (limited space available), Week 3: July 3-7 (a four-day week), Week 4: July 10-14, Week 5: July 17-21, Week 6: July 24-28, Week 7: July 31-Aug. 4, and Week 8: Aug. 7-11.

Day camp is for those 5-12 years old only. The fee is \$100 per week for Brattleboro residents and \$115 for non-residents, except for Week 3, which will be \$80 for Brattleboro residents and \$95 for non-Brattleboro residents.

Camp takes place at Living Memorial Park and runs 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday. Children will participate in arts and crafts, sports, games, archery,

music, drama, hiking, swimming, and special events.

There will be a pre-camp care drop-off program offered Tuesday through Friday each week from 7:45 to 8:30 a.m. The fee for pre-camp care is \$5 per child, per day. Sign your campers up with the program coordinator on Monday for the remainder of the week, as they will be limited to 15 spaces each morning. Drop off will be at the Senior Area at the far end of the lower parking lot. On the week of July 4, they will have the program only Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.

After-camp care will be offered from 4 to 5 p.m. every day. Sign up at the beginning of the week, as space is limited and on a first come, first served basis.

The fee for after camp care is \$5 per child per day. Pick up for After Camp Care will be at the Nelson Withington Skating Facility.

Anyone interested in signing up should stop by the Rec. Dept. office at the Gibson-Aiken Center on Main Street, or register online at bit.ly/709-camp. Call the Gibson-Aiken Center office at 802-254-5808 for more information.

Youth Services' Summer Resources Calendar now available

BRATTLEBORO — Youth Services has once again created a downloadable spreadsheet of camps in Windham County as a service to area families. Dates, age range, cost, and scholarship availability are listed as well as contact information.

Organizations who provided information for this listing include Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center, River Gallery School, Boys & Girls Club, Brattleboro School of Dance, Brattleboro Outing Club/Tennis, Meeting Waters YMCA, Miss Martha's Creative ELP, Brattleboro Recreation & Parks Dept., Giant Journey Farm, Greater Burlington YMCA, In-Sight Photography Project, New England Center for Circus Arts, The Neighborhood Schoolhouse, Theatre Adventure, VT Fish & Wildlife, Vermont Wilderness School, and more.

The Summer Resources Listing is available now online. For more information, call Youth Services at 802-257-0361 or visit youthservicesinc.org/publications, where you can access or download the listing.

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

bc tv LOCAL PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

April 3-9

CHANNEL 1078 CHANNEL 1079

PLEASE NOTE NEW CHANNEL NUMBERS!

<p>Here We Are with guest Hannah Hoffman: Mon 8p, Tues 12:05p, Wed 12:30p, Thurs 5:15p, Sun 7:15p</p> <p>The World Fusion Show - Ep 149 - Mei Han: Mon 8:30p, Tues 6:15a, Wed 12:05p, Thurs 10:30a, Fri 7:30a, Sat 12:30p & 6:30p</p> <p>Media Mentoring Project - How Social Media is Changing Our World: Wed 9p, Thurs 9a, Fri 12:05p, Sat 8p, Sun 5:30p</p> <p>Brooks Memorial Library Events - GennaRose Nethercott 1/27/23: Mon 2:15p, Tues 10:15a, Thurs 2:30p, Sat 9:50p, Sun 8p</p> <p>Thorn in My Side - HOLLYWOOD - August 18, 2022: Mon 10a, Tues 12:45p, Wed 3:30p, Thurs 2:45p, Fri 9:30p, Sat 9a, Sun 9:15p</p> <p>Brooks Memorial Library Events - Hiking VT's 500 Highest with Spencer Crispe 2/8/23: Mon 12:05p, Tues 3:15p, Thurs 4p, Fri 1:30p, Sat 10:15a, Sun 5:45a</p> <p>Brattleboro Literary Festival - A Trillion Trees w/Fred Pearce and Lisa Merton: Mon 3:30p, Tues 8p, Wed 9a, Sun 4p</p> <p>Guilford Community Church Easter Livestream: Sun 10a (LIVE)</p> <p>Energy Week with George Harvey & Tom Finnell: Mon 9a, Tues 5p, Thurs 11a, Sat 7p</p> <p>Vermontwide - Weekly Episode: Tue 11:30a & 6:30p, Wed 6a, Thu 1p, Sat 12p, Sun 5p</p>	<p>Brattleboro Representative Town Meeting 2023: Mon 11a, Wed 7a</p> <p>Brattleboro Selectboard Mtg. 4/4/23/23: Mon 6:15p (LIVE), Thurs 1p, Fri 8:30p, Sat 8a, Sun 1p</p> <p>Newfane Selectboard Mtg. 4/5/23: Wed 6p, Thurs 6a, Fri 11:30a, Sun 6p</p> <p>Brattleboro Planning Commission Mtg. 4/3/23: Wed 8:30p, Thurs 8:30a, Fri 2p, Sun 8:30p</p> <p>River Valleys Unified School District Bd Mtg. 4/5/23: Thurs 6p, Fri 8a, Sun 12p</p> <p>Vernon Selectboard Mtg. 4/4/23: Thurs 8:30p, Fri 5:30a, Sat 2:30p</p> <p>Putney Selectboard Mtg. 4/5/23: Sat 6p, Sun 5:30a</p> <p>Dummerston Selectboard Mtg. 4/5/23: Fri 6p, Sat 5:30a, Sun 10:30a</p> <p>Brattleboro Development Review Board Mtg. 4/5/23: Sat 8:30p</p> <p>Windham Southeast Supervisory Union Board Mtg. 3/29/23: Mon 9p, Tues 10a, Thurs 11a</p>
<p>WTSA News: Mon-Fri 12p & 6p</p> <p>St. Michael's Episcopal Church - Weekly Service: Wed 2p, Sat 7:30a, Sun 11:30a</p> <p>Calvary Chapel of the West River Valley - Weekly Service: Tue 9a, Sat 5:30p, Sun 1p</p> <p>Trinity Lutheran Church - Weekly Service: Wed 10a, Thurs 7a, Sun 3p</p> <p>Guilford Community Church - Weekly Service: Wed 6:30a, Fri 8p, Sun 8a</p> <p>St. Michael's Catholic Church Mass: Sat 4p, Tue 6:45a & 2p, Thurs 8p</p>	<p>Brattleboro Housing Partnerships Board Mtg. 3/27/23: Mon 7a, Tues 5p, Wed 6a</p> <p>Guilford Selectboard Mtg. 3/27/23: Mon 9a, Tues 3p</p> <p>Jamaica Selectboard Mtg. 3/27/23:</p> <p>Windham Southeast School District Board Mtg. 3/28/23: Mon 10a, Tues 4p</p> <p>St. Michael's Catholic Church Easter Livestream: Sun 8a (LIVE)</p> <p>The David Pakman Show: Mon 8a, Tue 9a, Wed 5p, Fri 10:30a, Sun 5p</p>

Note: Schedule subject to change.

View full schedule and watch online at brattleborotv.org

BCTV's Program Highlights are sponsored by The Commons. BCTV's municipal meeting coverage helps Commons reporters stay in touch. Read about it in the Town & Village section at www.commonnews.org.

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St. Michael's Episcopal Church prepares for Easter

BRATTLEBORO—Holy Week is honored at St. Michael's Episcopal Church on Bradley Avenue from Palm Sunday through Easter morning. While the public is welcome to all services, a few of broader interest are, first, the Tenebrae on Wednesday, April 5, at 7 p.m.

This Holy Week tradition — otherwise known as the Service of Shadows — is not a time of celebration, “but a time of contemplation, meditation, and prayerful reflection of what this time in the Passion (the suffering) of Jesus means for us and for the world,” says coordinator Craig Hammond.

With prayer, scripture, poetry, and music, the service begins in twilight and ends in darkness lit with candles. “Tenebrae is the origin of Evening Prayers and Morning Prayers in the Anglican Communion,” Hammond adds. “In that spirit and faithful to the contemplative nature of Holy Week, we offer this evening as a contemporary reverent time for all.”

Music for the Tenebrae this year includes works of J. S. Bach, Samuel Barber, Ennio Morricone, John Dowland, and Jean Sibelius, as well as Hebrew and Taize chants. Texts to be read are from the New Testament and from the writings of Mary Oliver, Christina Rossetti, Thich Nhat Hanh, Mary Elizabeth Fry, Danna Faulds, John O'Donohue, and Madeleine L'Engle.

Participants include St. Michael's Rector, the Rev. Mary Lindquist; St. Michael's interim musician, Patty Meyer; and parishioners Grainne Buchanan, Megan Buchanan, Greg Lesch, Joyce Vining Morgan, Chris Chapman, Annie Landenberger, Alli Ackerman-Hovis, Christopher Wesolowski, Bruce Landenberger, Craig Hammond, John Daly, and Judith Reichsman.

The Pascal Triduum — one story told over three days — then begins with Maundy Thursday, “when we enter into the story of Jesus' last supper and hear some of his last words to his disciples, including the ‘new commandment’ to ‘love one another as I have loved you’ (John 13:34),” Rev. Lindquist explains. “Just as Jesus washes the feet of his disciples, we wash one another's feet. Just as Jesus experiences the desolation of the Garden of Gethsemane, we experience this desolation in the stripping of the altar in the church.”

The evening begins with a meal and moves into the church for optional foot-washing, listening to the story of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, Holy Communion, intermittent Taize chants, and — for those who choose to stay — an all-night vigil or “Night Watch.”

The “second act of the Triduum,” Lindquist continues, is on Good Friday, “as we follow Jesus through his interrogation, arrest, and crucifixion.” This year at St. Michael's, there are two opportunities to participate in Good Friday. At noon, there will be a said service from the Book of Common Prayer with a reading of the Passion. At 7 p.m., there will be a choral liturgy with the Passion, prayers, hymns, and the Veneration of the Cross.

The final act of the Triduum is the Great Vigil of Easter. “At this, the ‘king of liturgies,’” Lindquist explains, “we light the new fire of Easter and move from darkness to light, telling the ancient stories of God's people.” This year, Easter Vigil will be celebrated on Sunday morning at 5:15 a.m., starting outside the church at 16 Bradley Ave. before moving into the sanctuary. Also on Easter morning will be an 8 a.m. Holy Eucharist and a 10:15 a.m. Festival Holy Eucharist with music.

All are welcome to St. Michael's Episcopal Church. All of the Holy Week Liturgies will be Livestreamed or Zoomed. Links can be found at stmichaels-vt.org.

To cherish what remains of the Earth and to foster its renewal is our only legitimate hope of survival.
—WENDELL BERRY

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www.vermontwildernessschool.org

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rivergalleryschool.org
802-257-1577

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7/24-7/28: Life Along The Water

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AGES 3 - 17

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June 26 - 30 | Teen Camp
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MORE INFO (802) 254-9780
Brattleboro, VT
CircusSchool.org

Brattleboro Recreation & Parks SUMMER PROGRAM Registration

Registration begins March 27th!

Register online at rebrand.ly/bratt-rec/summercamp

Register in person at the Gibson Aiken Center
207 Main Street, Brattleboro
Monday - Friday: 9am - Noon • 1pm - 4:30pm
802-254-5808

BOYS & GIRLS CLUB OF BRATTLEBORO

April Break Camps
April 17-21
www.bgcbrattleboro.org/camp

Kids Club Camp

Grades K-5
9:00am-3:00pm
Based at Retreat Farm

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Storm

FROM SECTION FRONT

nights and that it was “not the first time we’ve had really long outages, but it was the longest one in quite a while.”

Coping with lost power

Robert King, who lives on Putney Mountain, said he got 31 inches of snow in a storm that he described as another example of “weather volatility.”

He said he has had a backup power generator for 23 years “and have only used it twice,” but now “we are approaching a time when we’re going to have to use these tools much more.”

King said he was concerned that many people can’t afford generators. At the same time, he was concerned for the “Covid refugees” who moved to Vermont from points south over the past three years and “are unencumbered by any knowledge of survival when the power goes off.”

Sue Coakley and her husband, David, live on Spring Hill Road in Putney and were out of power for four days, mostly due to a transformer failure near their home.

She said their home primarily uses heat pumps and that they have a wood furnace as a backup heating source, but having a well-insulated and energy-efficient home meant she “hardly needed the wood furnace.” However, she said that having an electric stove and an electric well pump meant they had no water or way to cook.

Coakley said that energy efficiency should be a big part of any plan to build climate resilience. As a member of the Putney Planning Commission, she said that one element of the revised town plan is “a draft goal to weatherize 90% of homes in Putney over the next eight years.”

Having energy-efficient homes, she said, means less strain on backup batteries, which means less strain on the electric grid.

“Energy efficiency should be No. 1 in our resilience strategy, because then we don’t need as much power,” she said. However, Coakley said the ambitious weatherization goal may require a regional approach and having towns pool their resources to help achieve it.

Mrowicki agreed and said Vermont’s electric grid also needs to be “hardened” to protect against lengthy power outages.

Coakley agreed, saying that part of that process is expanding what known as the “smart grid,” where homeowners not just receive power from utilities but send excess power generated

from solar panels or wind turbines back to the utilities.

She said GMP “is ahead of the curve” compared to other utility companies in developing a two-way grid. She said a smart grid can not only handle demand during a winter peak, but it can also make it easier to restore power during outages.

Hashim said a bill has been introduced in the Senate to study the feasibility of utilities to bury more of their at-risk power lines to reduce the threat of extreme weather knocking down trees and taking lines with them.

Communication breakdown

Sarah Bedichek, who lives on Middle Road in Dummerston, said she was frustrated with the lack of communication during the storm. She and her husband were out of power for four days and did not have a backup generator.

“We lost our furnace, water pump, our voice-over-internet phone,” she said. “And we only have a weak cell signal. I consider myself lucky if I can text the single word ‘outage’ to GMP and have it delivered safely.”

While they put aside water and had a propane-fueled fire-place insert for a secondary heat source, she said the one thing they did not have was reliable communications.

“Getting updates [from GMP] about where things stand, especially in a long-term outage, was sort of impossible,” Bedichek said. “Normally, GMP does an excellent job in communicating, when you have access to the web. Their outage maps are full of information which really helped put any outage in context.”

“But when the power is down and there is very little cell signal and your cell battery is depleted, you really can’t look anywhere else,” she said.

“It’s really maddening when everyone says ‘go to our website’ or ‘go to our app,’” Bedichek continued. “We have no cell phone coverage on our road, and that’s why we still have a landline and old Princess phone that I can plug in and reach GMP when the power goes out.”

Mrowicki said that while the need for expanded cell phone service has been a perennial complaint among Vermonters for nearly two decades, few want cell towers built in their neighborhoods.

“We keep working to expand [coverage], but the surest way for a utility or a legislator to get

Perrin lawsuit

FROM SECTION FRONT

infliction of emotional distress.

The unfolding

In 2021, BUHS alum, educator, and writer Mindy Haskins Rogers illuminated student abuse by Hecker and others that spanned years in an essay published in *The Commons*. In response to the issues raised in the piece, the school district established a process whereby past and present members of the school community could report incidents.

In October 2022, *The Commons* published the story of “Jane Doe,” who was a sophomore at BUHS in 2010 when she alleges Perrin started to make unwanted and inappropriate sexual and romantic advances toward her and found other ways to make her life difficult, including trying to prevent her from graduating.

Doe also believes the former principal did not report her rape by a fellow student to the authorities, as he was mandated to do as an educator.

Friends and classmates corroborated Doe’s story, saying that they had witnessed Perrin’s continuing treatment of her. After the story broke, others stepped forward — both male and female — on social media to confirm similar treatment by the former principal.

Doe testified that when her rape was reported by another student and Perrin called her into his office, as the hours wore on and she refused to disclose details of the rape, the former principal’s interest felt more like “curiosity” than fact-gathering.

In its decision to fire Perrin, the WSESD board noted his “inappropriate and harmful investigation” of an alleged sexual assault against Doe.

In addition, the board notes testimony alleging he instructed at least one former employee in 2020 not to report to the Vermont Department of Children and Families (DCF) when she and another employee were made aware of incidents involving a then 14-year-old female student that they believed

required mandatory reporting. On April 25, 2022, WSESD Chair Kelly Young communicated via memo that Superintendent Mark Speno had placed Perrin on a paid leave of absence.

The board fired Perrin on Nov. 8 in a unanimous vote. He had not been on the job since before spring break of 2022, although he continued to collect his \$122,000 annual salary and benefits until being fired.

Perrin then exercised his right to an appeal, and the WSESD board held a hearing and heard testimony over two weeks from about a dozen witnesses, ending Jan. 30.

The hearing, according to statute, was held in executive session. Attorney Sean Tooley of Lynn, Lynn, Blackman & Manitsky, P.C., of the district’s legal team, moderated the proceedings. Attorney Kendall Hoechst of Dinse P.C. represented the board.

In February, the WSESD board upheld its original decision to fire Perrin.

Perrin has retained his administrator’s and teacher’s licenses from the Vermont Agency of Education. Both expire in 2024. The AOE closed an investigation into the former principal’s conduct without formal charges, it confirmed in a Jan. 5 email to Perrin.

Speno had also renewed Perrin’s contract for two years, through June 2024, which by statute, must have happened prior to February of this year.

A document dated March 25, 2022 and signed by Speno shows he then had agreed to a contract with Perrin for \$132,261 annually from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023.

Hired in 1995 as a science teacher, in 2007 Perrin moved to the role of assistant principal at BUHS. In 2011, he was named principal.

Supporters weigh in

Perrin received letters of support from two former superintendents: Ron Stahley, who

supervised him for a decade, and Lyle Holiday, who oversaw his work for three years, are among the testimonials included in the exhibits submitted by Kramer as part of the lawsuit.

“In all the years supervising Steve, I have never received a complaint about his behavior. Steve Perrin has always promoted student wellness and safety,” Stahley writes.

“I have always found him to be highly professional and trustworthy in his work,” writes Holiday. “He is considered a leader among his colleagues in both WSESD and throughout the state.”

Letters of support for Perrin also include those from BUHS Assistant Principal Chris Day, currently on military leave; Administrative Assistant Nicole Zolnoski; Anne Doran, school counselor at the Windham Regional Career Center; former Brattleboro Area Middle School Principal Ingrid Chrisco; former BUHS Counselor Bill Jahn; Assistant Principal Jennifer Brown; and Kathy Rouleau-Venice, administrative secretary and “confidential secretary” to the BUHS principal since 2005.

Perrin’s lawsuit asserts that current Superintendent Mark Speno “has stated he has no reason to disagree with these testimonials” and was “directed by the board not to participate in the investigation and review of allegations” against Perrin.

Speno did not respond to a query from *The Commons* to confirm these words.

The lawsuit contends that despite a superintendent’s role being to hire and supervise principals, the WSESD board “conducted its affairs with one and only one goal in mind, to placate a vocal minority’s insistence that student claims of mistreatment be treated seriously.”

“In furtherance of its mission to find a scapegoat, a sacrificial lamb,” the Board placed Perrin on administrative leave with allegations against him handled by a lawyer and not the superintendent, the former principal continues.

He alleges that the Board forbade him from talking to anyone interviewed by that lawyer and from “discussing the allegations against him with anyone,” forbade him access to records, and did not allow him or Kramer to view a video of Jane Doe’s interview with Brattleboro police.

The lawsuit asserts “the practical and foreseeable consequence” of these directives is that “Plaintiff shall never work as a principal ever again.”

“The reality is that Plaintiff could have presented evidence of his integrity, professionalism, and devotion from God Almighty himself and Defendants would have terminated him anyway,” the lawsuit says.

Culture fix needed?

Justice Law Collaborative (JLC) represented Jane Doe during Perrin’s WSESD appeal hearing.

“Perrin’s refusal to take responsibility for the harm he has caused is deplorable,” the firm wrote Tuesday in a statement to *The Commons*. “Perrin’s misconduct that resulted in his dismissal from the school was a result of his failure to take complaints of sexual harassment seriously and failure to refrain from harassing students himself.”

“The culture that has allowed sexual harassment and abuse of vulnerable students to exist must come to an end; the first step is removing responsible leaders, including Perrin.”

“The staff and administrators that continue to support Perrin are an integral part of the cultural problem that exists today. Perhaps one day he will accept responsibility for his role in the harm he has caused students who were promised safety while in his care and under his supervision. Clearly today is not that day, and it’s a shame for all survivors.”

swamped with complaints is to suggest putting up a cell tower somewhere,” he said.

Where was radio?

Several of the dozen people who attended the virtual meeting recalled that during the aftermath

of Tropical Storm Irene in 2011, when several towns were left isolated after massive flood damage, local radio did do a better job relaying information.

Local radio would have been an alternative, Bedichek said, but she said “they had really limited information.” She didn’t really know about the true extent of the outages in Dummerston until her daughter came by to visit and was able to call up the GMP outage maps on her phone.

“I know that a lot of people must have limited cell service, so I really wonder why we have gotten away from having a radio broadcast that can be accessed by almost any household to really give us context,” she said.

Howard Weiss-Tisman, who lives in Westminster and is the southern Vermont reporter for Vermont Public, said that both commercial and public radio stations are going through a transition from over-the-air

broadcasting to streaming their programs.

“People are moving more and more toward the internet and accessing us through their apps, through their smart phones, and streaming,” he said. “The future [for broadcasters] is moving away from towers on mountains, which are very expensive and aren’t 100% reliable.”

According to Weiss-Tisman, utility officials have told him that in the 12 years since Irene, people have become more dependent on electricity for just about everything in the home. “We have so much attached to the grid at the same time that climate change is happening,” he said.

Coakley said that regardless of the fixes to the electric grid or communications, the most important thing after a storm doesn’t need batteries or a cell signal, and that is the tradition of “Vermonters taking care of Vermonters” in a crisis.

“In our neighborhood, people looked out for each other and they helped each other out. People actually had fun together and meals together,” she said.

“It’s just part of the culture, and we’ll always need to continue to do that,” Coakley observed.

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West River Valley students celebrate award-winning books

NEWFANE—This April, student work from Dover, NewBrook, Jamaica, Townshend, and Wardsboro schools will be on display at the Moore Free Library and Crowell Gallery.

Unified Arts teachers in the West River and River Valley school districts have been collaborating in connection with Vermont's Red Clover books.

The Red Clover Book Award is designed for children in kindergarten through fourth grade. Each year, thousands of Vermont school children read the 10 nominated picture books and vote for

their favorite in the spring. The award has been handed out annually since 1997.

This winter, students listened to two Red Clover Books: *The Midnight Fair*, written by Gideon Sterer and illustrated by Mariachiara Di Giorgio, and *Someone Builds the Dream*, written by Lisa Wheeler with illustrations by Loren Long.

Students created art, made music, wrote fiction, and moved their bodies in a multi-disciplinary unit of study. The artwork, both 2D and 3D, on display was inspired by the books' themes: nighttime,

forest creatures, and The Fair. Some students even built "the fairground dream-ride" of another student's drawn-design. Students also collaborated to create their own musical score to accompany the wordless *Midnight Fair*. Student writing exploring what it might feel like to be an animal looking in on a fair will also be on display.

This artwork will be on exhibit Friday, April 7, through Saturday, April 29, at the library and gallery.

Guitarist Hiroya Tsukamoto plans house concert in Guilford

GUILFORD—Guitarist Hiroya Tsukamoto will perform in Wendy's Jazz Soiree Series in Guilford on Sunday, April 9, at 3 p.m. There will be no intermission and masks are optional. Admission is \$15-\$20 at the door. Call 802-254-6189 for information and directions.

Hiroya Tsukamoto is an innovative guitarist and composer who fuses folk, jazz, and world music. Born and raised in Japan, he received a scholarship in 2000

to Berklee College of Music and came to the United States. He now lives with his family in New York City, from where he tours extensively.

According to a news release, Tsukamoto's instrumental abilities "are indeed breathtaking and astounding, but his performances are so much more than that. He has the unique capability of engaging an audience through a personable and genuine approach that transfuses his audience and

almost transcends his capabilities as a guitarist. He plays with an effortless skill on the guitar and a repertoire that will have you traveling the world."

Tsukamoto has headlined concerts throughout the U.S. and internationally, including the Blue Note in New York City, the United Nations, and Japanese National Television. In 2022, he won second place in the International Finger Style Guitar Championship competition.

Local circus artists win top prizes in Las Vegas while aspiring hopefuls converge in Brattleboro

BRATTLEBORO—New England Center for Circus Arts (NECCA), is creating employment opportunities for aspiring aerialists, acrobats, jugglers, clowns, and more.

Each year, NECCA sponsors a graduate to attend Vegas International Variety Act (VIVA) Fest, an international circus gathering and competition based in Las Vegas.

This year, in addition to the sponsored student who receives financial support to attend, eight other aspiring circus professionals from NECCA were accepted into VIVA Fest to compete in the Emerging Pro category.

NECCA co-founders and on-staff coaches, Elsie Smith and Serenity Smith Forchion, attended to support performers, and were invited to serve as judges in other categories and to host workshops with the

competitors, who numbered in the hundreds from as far away as Japan.

The student competitors all placed in their categories, including Julian McTaggart, who grew up in Brattleboro and found circus through NECCA when he took a trampoline class at the custom-built Trapezium.

McTaggart won the overall VIVA Fest Emerging Pro award that is given to the top competitor from all apparatus categories. He also earned first place in the Emerging Aerial Straps A category.

Other awards received by NECCA students included: Kaista Russel, Emerging Aerial Hoop C, first place, and Circus Talk Award; Elly Craig, Emerging Cyr Wheel, second place; Eliza Gaston, Emerging Aerial Hoop B, second place; Caitlyn Wallace, Emerging Dance Trapeze, third

place; Joelle Nye, Emerging Invented Apparatus, fourth place; Bailey Scherer, Emerging Dance Trapeze, fifth place; and Megan Gimmig, Emerging Dance Trapeze, seventh place.

Two competitors who have trained at NECCA in the past won awards: Jessica Waters, Emerging Aerial Silks A, 1st place, and Emerging Straps, second place; and Doug Stewart, Emerging Rope, second place.

"Working with my coach, Serenity, to make something I am really proud of is a gift that I will carry with me for a long time," Craig said in a news release. "I grew and learned so much as a performer through this experience."

Another opportunity for aspiring circus artists at NECCA is auditioning for top producers, like AIDA Cruise lines. On March 23, the company sent an

Keith Haring exhibition at BMAC extended to June 11

BRATTLEBORO—A Brattleboro Museum & Art Center (BMAC) exhibition of drawings by famed pop artist Keith Haring, originally scheduled to close on April 16, has been extended to June 11.

The works in the exhibition were previously slated to ship directly from Brattleboro to Barcelona for an exhibition opening this spring at the Moco Museum. With that exhibition now scheduled to open in November, BMAC visitors have two more months to enjoy Haring's iconic art.

"Keith Haring: Subway Drawings" includes a selection of the historic drawings that Haring made illegally in New York City subway stations in the early 1980s. These groundbreaking works, which embody the street art, hip-hop, and urban energy of their time, catapulted the previously unknown artist to fame. Following on previous projects Haring had carried out in public spaces, the subway drawings brought the artist's work

directly to the public, bypassing the rarefied world of art galleries and museums.

Haring recognized the significance of the subway drawings in his artistic development and career: "The subway drawings were, as much as they were drawings, performances. It was where I learned how to draw in public. You draw in front of people. For me it was a whole sort of philosophical and sociological experiment. When I drew, I drew in the daytime, which meant there were always people watching."

On Friday, April 14, at 8 p.m., BMAC will celebrate the exhibition with a "Radiant Baby Dance Party" for ages 21 and up. DJ Matt Kreffling will serve up 1980s hits, and the Whetstone Beer Co. will provide a cash bar with a selection of beers, cocktails, and mocktails. Creative 80s attire is encouraged. This event is sponsored by Vermont Hempicurean, Vermont Bud Barn, and Vermont Grow Barn. Tickets can be purchased at brattleboromuseum.org.

VTC presents 'Earnest! A Trivial Comedy for Serious People'

BRATTLEBORO—The Vermont Theatre Company is pleased to present *Earnest! A Trivial Comedy for Serious People*. This version of Oscar Wilde's wittiest play will be like no other version available, having been lovingly reimagined and modernized by director CC.

While the text has been edited some for time and clarity, the material and language of this production of *Earnest* largely remains the same, but with a twist.

We follow Algernon, the middle class black sheep in a family of successful entrepreneurs, on his lifelong quest to utilize his 23andMe results to cause chaos.

Other zany characters include his Aunt Augusta, who owns a world renowned fashion company; her adopted child, who is a little too interested in the name of Algernon's best friend; a love interest with an active AO3 fanfiction account; a tutor with a secret past who's in a torrid love affair with the local priest; and a best friend who gets dragged along, kicking and screaming, on this Wilde Bunburying adventure.

The production stars Nicole Caron as Johanna (Jack) Worthing, J.P.; Elliot Vigue as Algernon Moncrieff, Olivia McNeely as Hon. Gwendolen Fairfax, Eden Gorst as Cecily

Cardew, Geof Dolman as Lady Augusta Bracknell, Clowdinst as Laetitia Prism, Katy Peterson as Rev. Caroline Chasuble, D.D., and Patrick Caron as Moulton Merriman/Lane.

Performances will take place at the Hooker-Dunham Theater and Gallery on Fridays through Sundays, April 14-16 and 21-23. Friday and Saturday performances begin at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday's are at 3 p.m. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$13 for students and seniors.

For reservations call 802-689-6206 or email vtreservations@gmail.com.

audition team to audition NECCA students as well as invited auditions from the region. Circus performers are part of the cruise line's onboard entertainment in North America, Europe, and the Middle East.

"It's important for myself and other staff who worked for Cirque du Soleil and other top producers to connect our students to their first career opportunity when they graduate," said NECCA Executive Director Jenna Struble. "Our first priority is ensuring they have employment after graduation and hosting auditions like AIDA's is important to this goal."

Within the same week, NECCA hosted 30 prospective students and their families from

all over the country on March 22 and 23 here in Brattleboro. Auditionees met the NECCA Team and shared their skills and ambitions to build a career as a professional circus performer. Students were evaluated on their physical skills, creativity and artistic expression, professionalism, and their teamwork.

Elena Day, NECCA's ProTrack Director and formerly a lead character with Cirque du Soleil's *La Nouba*, said that "having the opportunity to meet the next generation of circus artists at our live auditions is always an exciting time. Once accepted to NECCA's ProTrack Program, students have the opportunity to work with career coaches, whose depth of

experience and connections in the field are profound."

Day said that the opportunities of VIVA Fest and the cruise auditions demonstrate that "attending NECCA's ProTrack Program is a surefire way to launch your circus career."

For more information about NECCA, visit necenterforcircusarts.org or call 802-254-9780.



WEDNESDAY CONT.

psychobilly, metal to a new level. Singer, songwriter, violinist Lightnin' Luke's bluesy vocals, heartfelt lyrics, wild fiddle playing made him a versatile musical force.

► 8 p.m.
► \$20 in advance, \$25 at door.
► The Stone Church in Brattleboro, 210 Main St. Information: tickets.stonechurchvt.com.

Kids and families

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

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

BRATTLEBORO The Village Closet:

Your source for free baby, pregnancy and clothing/items. Donations of gently used items accepted. If you have items to donate, please stop by soon.

► Open Wednesdays 4-6 p.m., Saturdays 10 a.m.-12 noon, or by appointment.
► Free.
► The Village Closet, Croker Hall, Winton Prouty Campus, 60 Austine Dr. Information: More info: brattleborovillage@gmail.com.

Well-being

BRATTLEBORO Aerial Yoga Class Offers Health Benefits:

Aerial Yoga is now offered through NECCA to Brattleboro area residents of all ages/body types. Beginners are welcome in this yoga flow class that utilizes loops of fabric attached to the ceiling to support the body. Participants experience suspension on professionally and safely installed equipment while staying close to the floor with low impact sequences that release tension and endorphins.

► 5:30 p.m. Wednesdays. For yoga practitioners, loops of fabric make inversions/yoga poses more accessible. Benefits include: relieving joint pressure and spinal compression that floor workouts can trigger, increased balance, improved breath/body awareness, enhanced core strength for back and joint health. (Classes on Tuesdays start at 7:30 a.m.).
► New England Center for Circus Arts, 74 Cotton Mill Hill, #30. Information: 802-254-9780. CircusSchool.org.

BRATTLEBORO Brattleboro Area Hospice: Kitchen Table Conversation about Advance Care Planning:

When you think of your most engaging/interesting conversations, didn't many of them happen around a kitchen table? BAH staff and volunteers with knowledge and experience on this subject will be sitting around the table with you, and together we will talk in a supportive and congenial atmosphere.
► 6-8 p.m. Space is limited.
► Free.
► Experienced Goods, 77 Flat St. VT Advance Directive Week April 9-16: <https://tinyurl.com/47jtfvu7>. National Health Care Decisions Day 4/16: <https://tinyurl.com/47jtfvu7> RSVP: info@brattleborohospice.org or 802-257-0775.

Taking Steps Brattleboro: Advance Care Planning Weekly Information Sessions (via Zoom):

Advance Care Planning ensures your loved ones/health professionals know what you want in a medical emergency if unable to speak for yourself. It's a process of creating a written health care plan that tells

others what you want if you couldn't tell them yourself including discussing choices about end-of-life care with your medical provider, family, others, choosing and educating your Health Care Agent, making informed decisions to complete an Advance Directive.

► 10-11 a.m. on Wednesdays. Find out if adding a COVID-19 or Dementia provision would be beneficial to include or add to a previously completed Advance Directive. This program is offered by Brattleboro Area Hospice.

► Free.
► Zoom. Information: Ruth Nangeroni, Advance Care Planning Program Coord.: 802-257-0775 x101, ruth.nangeroni@brattleborohospice.org.

BRATTLEBORO Strength Class with Lissa Stark offered by Brattleboro Recreation and Parks Senior Center:

This course focuses on strength training exercises that help us to become and stay strong, including techniques to improve balance, strengthen muscle and promote health and wellness. It is designed for all levels and no prior experience is necessary.
► 9:30-10:15 a.m. in the Gibson-Aiken Fitness Room year-round on Tuesdays and Fridays.
► \$5 per class.
► Gibson-Aiken Center, 207 Main St. Information: 802-257-7570, sclark@brattleboro.org.

Community building

BRATTLEBORO Parenting 4 Justice - Monthly Book Group:

Dive deep into the topics of Social Justice, Parenting for Social Justice, Parenting for Racial Justice, Parenting for Economic Justice, Parenting for Disability Justice, Parenting for Gender Justice, and Parenting for Collective Liberation. Facilitated by Abby Mnookin. Snacks provided; we also hope to offer childcare.
► 6-8 p.m. monthly, 2nd Wednesday. To sign up/have questions, email Abby at asmnookin@gmail.com. Some copies of "Parenting 4 Social Justice" by Abby Mnookin are available for loan from the library, can be purchased at *Everyone's Books*, or online.

Hosted by Brooks Memorial Library and Parenting for Social Justice.

► Free.
► Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. Information: 802-254-5290; brookslibraryvt.org.

Ideas and education

PUTNEY Forbes Columnist Denise Brodey discusses "Learning Disability Disclosure: Pros, Cons, and Personal Stories":

Brodey's talk addresses the weighty decision students w/ learning differences (LD) - such as dyslexia, ADHD, or autism - must make about disclosing LD when entering the workforce. Brodey will cover her own personal experience as well to help us gain a deeper understanding of how to create a psychologically supported and enjoyable environment for employees with LD.

► 7 p.m. Brodey is also founder of Boston-based consulting firm Rebel Talent which creates impact reports/interactive workshop materials for Fortune 500 companies interested in hiring unconventional talent. Her research shows leaders/managers how to create high-performing teams that embrace neurodiversity.
► Free and open to the public.
► Landmark College, Lewis Academic Bldg., O'Brien Auditorium, 1 River Road South. Information: marketing@landmark.edu or 802-387-7221.

Film and video

GREENFIELD "Loving Vincent":

Through the auspices of Goose Devine Energy, Garden Cinemas will feature a rare showing of Dorota Kobiela and Hugh Welchman's visually stunning 2017 art film, "Loving Vincent." This is the world's first oil painted motion picture and is a precursor to the immersive Van Gogh experience. Goose Devine Energy will set up shop at the theater featuring a selection of faux Van Goghs.
► 6:30 p.m.
► Free.
► Greenfield Garden Cinema, 361 Main St. Information: 413-774-4881.

PUTNEY NXT Rockumentary Film Series: "Festival

Express" (2003): This 2003 documentary film about the 1970 train tour of the same name across Canada taken by some of North America's most popular rock bands: Grateful Dead, Janis Joplin, The Band, Buddy Guy, Flying Burrito Bros, Ian & Sylvia's Great Speckled Bird, Mountain and Delaney and Bonnie & Friends. It combines footage of the 1970 concerts and on the train, interspersed with contemporary recollections of the tour by participants.
► 7 p.m. (90 min.). Introductory remarks from Jessamyn Fiore, Epsilon Spires' Board President and daughter of film's cinematographer, Bob Fiore.
► \$10 suggested donation.
► Next Stage Arts Project, 102 Kimball Hill. Information: 802-387-0102; nextstagearts.org.

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NIGHTLY 6:45 PM

JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 4

DAILY 3:45 PM
NIGHTLY 6:50 PM

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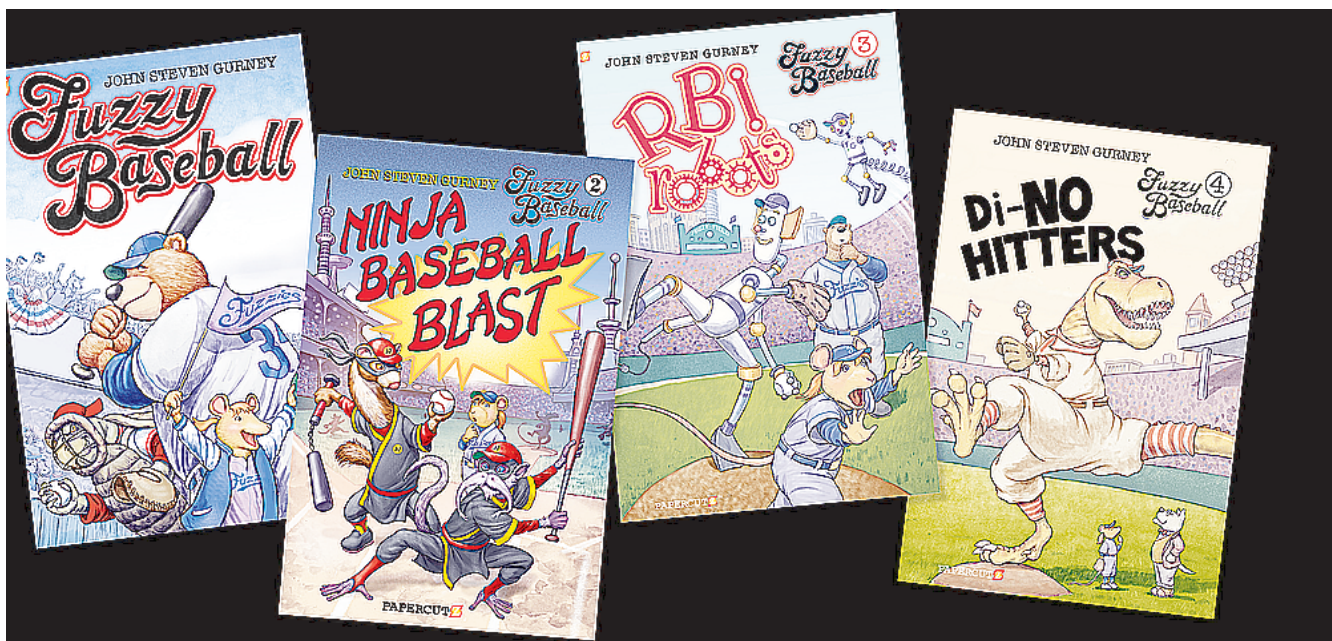
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John Steven Gurney writes and illustrates his “Fuzzy Baseball” series of graphic novels for young readers.

Gurney

outside of Philadelphia, where the Phillies were perpetual losers in the '70s but ended up winning the World Series in 1980. “By 2004 I was living in Vermont, and I had a similar experience as a Red Sox fan,” he said.

He explains how his experience cheering for his home team helped him with his writing. “That experience of rooting for the underdog who wins big was one of the driving forces behind the first book in the series,” he said.

First love: illustrating

Gurney said that at the same time as he was honing his craft with illustration, he was constantly writing. “As an undergraduate, my senior project was a comedic-fantasy graphic novel that I wrote and illustrated,” he said. “It got some interest, but was never published.”



John Steven Gurney

It took him almost 20 years to get his first book published. “It wasn’t until I had kids, and spent hundreds of hours reading bedtime stories, that I got a better sense of the genre,” he said.

“My first love is illustrating. When I write a story, I’m writing it so I can illustrate it,” Gurney said.

He said he loves using his illustrations to bring his characters to life.

When he writes a story, “it always starts by me sketching the characters, and then as the character comes to life I imagine what kind of a situation they would be in, and that’s the core of the story.”

He said he loves engaging the reader: “I want to give them something to care about, so they keep turning the pages.”

Gurney said he likes to set expectations, but also surprise readers.

“I love the ability to put words in my characters’ mouths,” he says. “Ideally, a character should communicate volumes just by their appearance, body language, and expression. But having them speak brings it to a whole other level.”

From analog to digital

Gurney said the process of illustration has changed a lot in the past couple of decades.

“Full color reproduction was very expensive and rare, so most of the interiors of books and magazines were either black and white, or one color with black,” he noted.

FROM SECTION FRONT



The Fuzzies team, ready to play ball.

He said the first big change was the fax machine in the late 1980s. “It was amazing to be able to fax sketches to the client, rather than bring them into the office. Or FedEx sketches to another state,” he said.

Although technology was changing the process of illustrations, and he did begin to use digital tools like Photoshop for some aspects of his work, Gurney would finish his work traditionally.

For some of the samples on his website, he has used an Apple iPad with an Apple Pencil, using ProCreate, an illustration and animation app.

“The biggest difference the digital age has wrought is that digital media has taken the place of print media,” he said.

Advice from a pro

Gurney is finishing his book *Fuzzy Baseball #5: Fuzzy BaseBALLoween*, expected to be out this fall.

After 30 years of illustrating, Gurney earned a master’s degree in illustration from the University of Hartford so he could teach at a college level. He plans for future books and workshops, as well as presentations at elementary schools.

He gives some advice to aspiring writers: “As an author, you have to strike a balance between being true to your own vision and listening to feedback from folks who are familiar with the medium.”

For more information about John Steven Gurney, visit johnstevengurney.com.

Memorial concerts

FROM SECTION FRONT

New England — is a stage large enough for a Broadway-sized theater performance or for seating a full symphony orchestra.

Rays the Roof Productions developed the Ray Massucco Memorial Concert Series in his memory, with a well-received inaugural concert on Feb. 4 featuring Kris Mathews and Dar Williams.

Maridee Serebrov, a central founder of Rays the Roof, described that initial concert as an emotional release for all the people in Massucco’s wide circle.

“This was something so important for us to do,” Serebrov said. “Ray meant so much to us.”

Serebrov said Massucco gave her both a wedding shower and a baby shower. Her first child was born in 2000 when the first Roots on the River Festival happened. That child, Izzy, has become a talented performer in his own right, and opened the last two Roots Festivals.

“Ray was so special,” Serebrov said. “How do you lose someone like that? How do you grieve? Rays the Roof was a way to keep his spirit and memory alive.”

With help from friends

Serebrov also noted that the production company team has worked with Hunter and Massucco, putting on concerts and festivals for over 20 years. “We know how to do this,” she said.

With Hunter serving as mentor and advisor and, in addition to Production Manager Veitch, Rays the Roof’s core staff includes Serebrov, who has been focused on developing the company’s website and social media presence.

While Veitch said that the production crew team is at the moment “really fluid,” also involved are Patrick LeBlanc as stage manager; Aimee Putnam, handling merchandise; and Crystal Powers overseeing the performers’ greenroom. Brattleboro-based sound engineer Dan Richardson, of concert sound and recording company Not Too Loud, will again handle the concert’s sound.

Though part of the live music scene for decades, this is Veitch’s first time running the show.

“This is a lot different for me,” he said. “It’s been eye-opening. I didn’t realize how much work is involved.”

He credits support from Hunter for making things run as smoothly as possible. The former musical promoter for many years has represented artists and has founded and staged festivals and music events, including music trains and cruises, but has focused mostly on a successful career for the last 20 years as a fine artist (or, as Hunter would put it, “a fairly fine artist”).

“Charlie has been a great support,” Veitch said. “He wants this to succeed. He wants to get regular, great live music back in Bellows Falls again.”

Hunter helped the production company connect with Putney’s performance center Next Stage Arts, which has been instrumental in helping Rays the Roof with promotion and advertising. The concert is also presented with support from the Rockingham Arts and Museum Project and Great Eastern Radio.

“Charlie is very organized,” Veitch said. “With all the concerts

and events he’s done, he’s set up a pattern that works. For example, six weeks out, we go through a punch list of what needs to be done. After that, he checks in regularly to help out.”

Hunter has extensive contacts in the music industry, and has been doing the artist negotiations and contracts.

Keith Marks, the executive director of Next Stage Arts, has built what Veitch describes as “a beautiful website.”

Veitch said that Marks has helped him appreciate that a vital priority in starting any kind of musical endeavor is “getting people to come in the door for the first time.”

Then, he said, “once they see what it is, and how great it is, and that they will hear great music,” it’s easier to get them to come back.

Veitch said that Next Stage Arts has made that happen by focusing on world music and ethnic performers. “That’s different from Bellows Falls,” he said. “They’ve got their niche, they know it, and they are good at it. We’ve always been in the singer-songwriter world, and we understand that world very well.”

That has been true going back many years to when the former Oona’s, the Windham Hotel, and Popolo restaurant would host regular, often-weekly, live music featuring nationally known Americana artists.

“We’re fortunate that we have people in Bellows Falls who have such connections to great musicians,” said Veitch. “And the Bellows Falls Opera House is such a viable theater. It’s a gift that this community has it.”

Building the concert series through the rest of 2023 and into 2024 is the focus of the production company at the moment, and “there’s a lot of work left to be done. We need to build the series for a year to make sure that we can do it,” Veitch said.

Rays the Roof will offer two more concerts in the fall: Chris Smither, with The Suitcase Junket opening, and the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, with Kat Wright. Massucco had traditionally brought the VSO to the Opera House in years past, and Rays the Roof is hoping to continue this tradition.

Veitch said that he is now starting to focus on 2024. “That’s when I’m really going to have to start working,” he said. “Our goal is to have a much more regular series of shows at the Opera House.”

He noted that, after growing up in the Bellows Falls area in his younger days, he traveled around the country extensively in search of a good music scene. When he returned to the area, he said, he was happy and surprised to find a really vibrant live music scene in his home town, spearheaded by Hunter and Gary Smith of Fort Apache Studios, who had also moved to the area. Smith’s death in January has been another blow to the local music community.

One advantage: “I know a lot of people, and I know a lot of people who will step up to help out if we need them,” Veitch said.

Serebrov agreed. “It takes a community being involved to keep this alive,” she said. “It’s super important, and this is a way for us to keep Ray at the center of that. To keep his spirit and memory alive.”

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VIEWPOINT

‘She was helping people’

Leah Rosin-Pritchard brought unconditional love and radical empathy to her work at Groundworks. Until our leaders listen — and then act to provide necessary services and programs — we will continue to see tragedies like this one.

THIS MORNING, I found out that Leah Rosin-Pritchard was beaten to death with a hatchet. The description I heard from an eyewitness was graphic and brutal.

I am shocked by this loss of life, and I am profoundly sad because I believe this was preventable. I will honor Leah and her radical empathy by telling parts of my own story as it relates to events and circumstances that led to this tragic incident.

My relationship with Leah was professional. I was a client of the Groundworks shelter while she was the case manager.

We had some great conversations about how to live a well-rounded, productive, happy life and what that looks like. I believe she was living her life in that way.

We would talk about something that I have learned to be the fundamental issue we as humans are always debating: “How do we take care of ourselves and each other?” Every topic, every debate in the town square, in politics, in conversations at the dinner table all have this common frame of reference — this common question we ask of ourselves every day.

Leah had radical empathy, which means she understood and accepted people as they are. No judgment. Unconditional love is what she gave of herself every day, to everyone in her life. She had created, and continued creating, a meaningful life for herself.

Anyone who knew her could see the confidence and love she carried with her.

As her client, I was able to grow and find my path forward to becoming housed again after three years of homelessness. Although I recognize there were others involved in my journey, Leah played a profound role in helping me get ready for and move into my current abode. Moving is one of the most stressful experiences life offers. Homelessness makes it hard to even imagine what it can be like to have a place to call home.

The last time I saw Leah, she was here at the shelter to assist a couple of my neighbors who were struggling. I saw her in a familiar position — crouched down — which she would do as a way to get down to the level of whoever she was speaking with, as adults

Brattleboro



Leah Rosin-Pritchard in her LinkedIn profile photograph.

NICHOLAS LUOMA, a resident of Brattleboro and the West River Valley since 2007, “spends his time seeking opportunities to contribute to his community in meaningful ways,” he says.

do with children who are crying. It seems to make people feel seen and heard.

She was smiling, and her eyes conveyed a sense of calm.

Although she would never have crossed the boundary to tell me what she thought of her job or her employer, I got the sense she was doing the work she wanted to be doing.

She was helping people.

THIS BRINGS ME to parts of my own story.

When I first lived on my own, away from my parents, my neighbors were the kind of neighbors anyone would want: kind, generous, fun to spend time with, but also the kind of people you can count on if times get tough.

I learned how to be a good neighbor from these neighbors — what it really means to share a cup of sugar, so to speak.

One evening, I had finished smoking a joint with the Mr. of the house, and I sat in the kitchen while the Mrs. was cooking. I loved to talk with her about life.

She is a Christian, a first-generation immigrant. Her family lived in New York City; she wanted a life closer to the land and moved to Vermont with her husband. They grow and raise much of their own food.

This particular evening we got onto the topic of our purpose here on Earth.

“The longer I’m here, the more I just think we are all just here to help each other,” my neighbor told me.

This has been a guiding value for me ever since. It is also why I must speak up now.

FOR MANY YEARS, I worked in the hospitality industry — food and beverage, hotel, catering, etc. I burned out from that work and was unemployed for over a year. Then I found work at Groundworks Collaborative.

In many ways, I found the job both personally and professionally rewarding. But eventually, I found I was often the target of verbal abuse from clients.

I don’t blame clients for this. Having experienced homelessness at different times in my life, I understand the stress that comes with this experience and the frustration that there isn’t a better safety net for our friends and neighbors, that our society is unable to resolve this issue.

However, I have come to learn that these positions require more qualified workers. Groundworks ends up playing host to a growing number of clients whose needs are significant, and the facilities and programs they operate are not capable of providing the level of care needed for many of them — even when I worked there.

Eventually, what happened to me is that I was asked to become the live-in key holder at Great River Terrace on Putney Road. I moved in and then realized I was living with many of the clients I had been working with at Groundworks.

As a result, one of the clients who was jealous about the people who were becoming housed there — and who was jealous of my living there — followed me home and made threats to me and other residents.

That was the first major trauma I experienced while working for Groundworks. One of my supervisors later told me they should’ve done more to protect me.

I tend to try to ignore trauma, and then I fall apart months later. That incident did not seem to affect me right away, and I went to a subsequent job. But there, another trauma brought up my Great River Terrace experience, and I found myself without work.

The fact is, even the leaders at Groundworks, despite their good intentions, are not equipped to deal with the myriad issues facing both employees and the clients they serve.

AFTER READING the first accounts of news today, I am angry.

I am angry that the needs of the clients are not the priority of Groundworks. In a statement, the board said the organization is “grateful for the outpouring of support from the community” and “at the moment they are focused on staff, volunteers, and clients.”

Of course, staff need support, but the primary focus should always be the clients. But because of much of the funding Groundworks receives, the



Morningside House, as it appears on Groundworks’ website.

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Helping people

organization is unable to advocate for the needs of its clients in a meaningful way.

As a nonprofit prohibited from engaging in politics, Groundworks is restricted from advocating for changes in the law. It is prohibited from working to convince the Legislature that to end homelessness and to actually provide help to the community members suffering from severe mental health issues, we must have both mental health funding and diverse, long-term, comprehensive mental health and substance-use treatment.

THE PERSON charged with murdering Leah Rosin-Pritchard is a victim of apathy.

Having met Zaaina Mahvish-Jammeh, and having lived in the shelter with her for a couple of months, I know for sure her specific needs far exceeded the scope of what Groundworks could provide.

But here is the problem,

as I understand it: The state wouldn't provide her with the psychiatric medical care that she needs. There are not enough diverse programs for people with various types of mental illness — what is available is generic and not nearly comprehensive enough to help people like her to live productive lives.

I am also angry with state Sen. Nader Hashim for his comments, where he suggested that the problem is an increase in homicides in Brattleboro.

The fact is, we have several major crises happening in the United States today which are not being addressed in a meaningful way. The homicides are a symptom of apathy. The narratives about homelessness, substance use, and mental illness are being driven by people who are only serving themselves.

WE ARE LIVING in a time when people are dying at alarming rates and in increasingly brutal ways. As a society, we need to

start listening to the people who are most impacted.

We need to listen to those who are homeless. We need to listen to those suffering from mental illness and substance-use disorder.

We need to innovate new treatments that are long-term and comprehensive. These treatment programs need to also be linked to housing.

Until our leaders are willing to listen, and then take action to provide the services and programs these people say they need, we will continue to see tragedies like this.

Our community has lost a great woman. Leah Rosin-Pritchard's capacity for empathy is why Zaaina Mahvish-Jammeh was still at the shelter.

The reality is, if Zaaina had been forced to leave sooner, she would have been on the street this winter. The Groundworks Drop-in Center would not have been able to handle her, the

state wouldn't have put her into a mental health treatment facility to stabilize her and then find adequate housing, so she probably would have died outside this winter if not for Leah finding a way to provide her with space at the shelter.

I don't think anyone would have thought this particular tragedy would necessarily happen with this particular client, but it is a consequence of the lack of strict policy regarding the level of care Groundworks is capable of providing.

I would also point out that another client Leah had helped to get housed from the shelter died only a week after moving into a nursing home. Although I cannot speak to what she felt about that, I would imagine that she would decide to ask someone to leave.

Leah lived her life asking the question: "How do we care for ourselves and each other?"

I think of my neighbor's

FROM SECTION FRONT

ESSAY

My empathy tank hath run dry for tailgaters

You will always take longer to stop than the car ahead of you. And I'm in front of you.

ABOUT 2,000 TAILGATERS ago, I wrote about tailgating ["Your driving evokes murmurations in nature. Now slow down and back off!," Essay, April 13, 2022]. I was open to thinking that tailgaters' ideas about tailgating could be something altogether different than mine.

After all, they're looking at my rear end while I'm looking for their front end.

I likened tailgaters to flocks of birds dancing in three-dimensional high-speed harmony and warned that all it takes is one tailgater, bird or human, with a sprained wing or cardiac arrest to throw an entire system of highway flyers or drivers out of whack.

And although I'd never observed an undulating flock of birds spin out of control, I had seen tailgaters do so. I used tailgating as a vehicle to caution readers that our incredible rate of unsustainable consumption will rear-end us over the edge of the very systems we depend on.

I was a bumper away from forgiving tailgaters. After all, not seeing the hood of the car behind me while going 70 mph had to be my fault, particularly when there were plenty of opportunities to pass.

Hogwash! After another you've-got-to-be-kidding-me drive on the Merritt, Hutch, and the Long Island Expressway in Connecticut and New York, respectively, I say unapologetically: I do not forgive tailgaters!

Proceed with caution, tailgaters. My empathy tank hath run dry. I am about to spin around and direct my brights into your inexcusable behavior. If you're worried my rant will crash into your core, buckle up and exit here!

I HAD BEEN traveling 5 mph above the speed limit when I started seeing my tailgaters' lips moving in my rearview. This is not easy, safe, or recommended. I swerve under oath that one of them was yelling:

"WTF does that Vermonter think they're doing going the friggins' speed limit on my road!? Faster! I don't want to be two seconds late for my second cousin's nephew's kids' 4th birthday party's magic-show opening act. Out of my way, safety freak!"

A few tailgaters later, I lip read, "Who do you think you are, going no more than 5 mph over the speed limit? You can't control me! You can't make me

JIMMY KARLAN is professor emeritus at Antioch University in Keene, N.H. For 25 years he commuted from Guilford to Keene, never closer than four seconds behind.

obey the law. That's my choice. I'm so mad I'm not going to pass you even though I can. Get out of my way!"

And then, *bam!* I was blindsided out of nowhere, and it hit me: Most tailgaters are likely not thinking about me at all. Go figure.

I base this on tailgaters 27 and 42, who were singing along to love songs like "Close to You" and "Don't Leave Me Behind."

WHAT I HAVEN'T figured out is what tailgaters think about their tailgaters. Do they see a reflection of themselves: good-looking, self-assured, worry-free? Do they feel the excitement of maneuvering in synchronization with a fellow member of their flock? Do they think they're at risk of being smashed into 4,000 pounds of metal?

Which raises the question: Why would tailgaters risk trading body parts for two seconds? Did their boss threaten to fire them the next time they're two seconds late?

Would their fiancé call off the wedding when they showed up two seconds late?

What do they do with all that extra time?


TAILGATERS, consider this basic principle: You will always take longer to stop than the car ahead of you. Imagine tailgating me, and I slam on my brakes to avoid a deer. If I am going 65 mph, it's going to take about 200 ft. (two-thirds of a football field) to stop.

But it's going to take you longer because there's a lag time between when you notice my brake lights and when you decide to brake but haven't yet!

At 65 mph, you'll have gone about 140 feet before you even begin to touch your brake. There's only one possible outcome: a system out of control. Bam!

Before exiting this car-thartic rant, I have one small request: birthday party's magic-show Mississippi (or more) behind. Count: one Mississippi, two Mississippi, three Mississippi, four Mississippi.

That's all I'm asking. Good Car-ma doesn't have to be an accident.



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Fish & Wildlife Department offers tips on coexistence with bears

WATERBURY—The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department says it has begun to receive reports of bears coming out of their dens as the weather warms, and that now is the time to take these proactive steps to help prevent bears from looking for food in your yards and neighborhoods:

- Take down your bird-feeder. Between late March and December, birdfeeders should not be used. You can attract birds by planting bird-friendly native plants instead. Check out Audubon's Native Plants for Birds Program at audubon.org/native-plants.
- Make your garbage inaccessible. Store garbage in a secure structure and a bear-proof container.
- Demand bear-proof dumpsters on behalf of your community. Your garbage hauler should be able to provide these.
- Dispose of garbage frequently. If you have curbside services, wait until the morning of pickup to put your garbage out.
- Follow steps for composting. Compost needs to be three parts brown materials to one part kitchen scraps, turned

frequently, and kept in a sturdy tumbler or bin.

– Use electric fencing to keep chickens and bees safe. Fences need to be 4,000–6,000 volts, tested regularly and baited.

– Clean your grill after every use. For added effectiveness, keep your grill in a secure outbuilding between uses after cleaning.

– Make bears feel uncomfortable if they are in your yard. Yell, bang pots and pans, or use other noise devices from inside your home. Never shoot a bear to scare it. Even BBs can seriously injure bears.

– Report your bear encounters to Vermont Fish & Wildlife. These reports allow them to help prevent future bear incidents as well as provide information to help all Vermonters better coexist with bears. File a report at bit.ly/670-coexist.

Following these steps can save bears' lives, and help protect you, your neighbors, and your property. If you have questions, contact the Fish & Wildlife department at 802-828-1000, or fwinformation@vermont.gov.

Vermont Everyone Eats program comes to a close

WESTMINSTER—After 32 months, seven program extensions, and more than 3.6 million meals distributed, the Vermont Everyone Eats (VEE) pandemic relief program ended on March 31.

Vermont Everyone Eats (VEE) was funded through a contract provided by the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development to Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA), made possible by over \$46 million in federal FEMA funding supplemented with a \$1.3 million allocation from the Vermont Legislature, and advised by a Statewide Task Force, including perspectives from restaurants, economic development, and hunger relief advocates.

Between August 2020 and March 2023, VEE has benefited tens of thousands of Vermonters by providing economic stabilization for independent restaurants, strengthening their relationships with farmers and food producers, and contributing significantly to statewide anti-hunger efforts during a time when food insecurity hit record highs.

With its unique cross-sector approach engaging local restaurants in providing prepared meals with Vermont ingredients for community members in need, organizers said in a news release that the Vermont Everyone Eats program leveraged more than \$46 million in federal COVID-19 relief funding.

According to Environmental Economist Elizabeth Schuster, VEE's multiplier effect — recirculating a single federal dollar across multiple local businesses — has likely catalyzed as much as \$66 million in additional local spending.

At the start of the COVID-19 emergency, state agency representatives, local and regional anti-hunger advocates, and economic development organizations established this innovative, wide-scale, multi-sector emergency response.

Collaborating entities in creating and coordinating Vermont Everyone Eats in southern Vermont included Chester

Helping Hands, Downtown Brattleboro Alliance, Food Connects, Hunger Free Vermont, MamaSezz, Southeastern Vermont Community Action, Springfield Family Center, The Collaborative, Wilmington Works, and others. More than 700 restaurants, farms, food producers, community organizations, and distribution partners participated throughout Vermont.

"The extraordinary impact of Vermont Everyone Eats was made possible by unprecedented collaboration among various entities across the state. The value of a multi-sector approach in efficiently combining efforts and resources informs a compelling model for future efforts," said Amanda Witman, VEE's Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Coordinator.

While multiple state and federal benefit programs are ending or decreasing, the economic challenges of the pandemic are still lingering for many individuals and businesses. However, the successes of VEE is spurring local partnerships to develop new ways to address community needs and creatively driving conversations around what comes next.

"Vermont Everyone Eats' COVID-19 efforts are coming to a close, but the innovation is still going strong," says VEE Task Force member Stephanie Bonin. "VEE showed us that our impact can be huge when we come together to meet our collective needs. I am excited to keep restaurant entrepreneurs, chefs, and staff in the food security conversation, because we are a powerhouse for change."

The VEE Task Force, in partnership with the Vermont Community Foundation, has funded several local initiative pilot projects to carry forward elements of the VEE model. The VEE momentum is also fueling other initiatives in communities across the state. For more information on VEE-inspired local initiatives, ongoing food resources, and program partners, visit the Vermont Everyone Eats website at vteveryoneeats.org.

SEVCA offers money management workshop

WESTMINSTER—It is always easy to spend money, but keeping track of rising costs is difficult.

Join Southeastern Vermont Community Action's (SEVCA) Financial and Energy Coach Kevin O'Brien at a free workshop on Monday, April 10, from 6 to 8 p.m., at the Brooks Memorial Library's upstairs meeting room, to gain a clearer picture of money management opportunities. This workshop will also be streamed online.

The financial world is confusing and often predatory, but there are tools one can use to understand how to make the system work for them. Participants will review some of these tools and

talk about current rebate and incentive programs that can help lower monthly costs.

Additional topics will include the basics of loans, credit score and credit reports, and understanding how to protect personal information, plus what to do if one's identity is stolen.

SEVCA's Financial and Energy Coach is supported through the Green Saving Smart program, which is guiding Vermonters to a sustainable financial future. For virtual sign up, setting up a one-on-one appointment, or more information, email kobrien@sevca.org. For more information about SEVCA, visit SEVCA.org or facebook.com/SEVCAorg, or call 800-464-9951.

Twin Valley School District failed to address harassment and 'hostile educational environment,' federal investigation finds

By Peter D'Auria
VtDigger.org

A federal investigation found that the Twin Valley Unified Union School District failed to prevent a "hostile" school climate that included "targeted peer harassment" at Twin Valley Middle-High School, officials announced on March 16.

In a settlement with the Department of Justice and the U.S. Attorney's Office, the district agreed to update its policies, improve training programs, and monitor the school's environment more closely, the agencies said.

"Schools should feel safe for all children, but when harassment does happen, schools have an obligation to respond appropriately so that every child has equal access to their education,"

U.S. Attorney for the District of Vermont Nikolas P. Kerest said in a press release. "Here, the school district has agreed to take significant steps to improve its process for responding to harassment and its overall educational environment."

In response to a request for comment, Barbara Komons-Montroll, the superintendent of the Windham Southwest Supervisory Union, sent a statement saying that the Twin Valley district had taken numerous steps to assess and improve its school climate, even before the settlement.

"We take this issue extremely seriously and have redoubled our dedication and commitment to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all students," the statement reads. "The

Agreement with the Department of Justice is an opportunity for us to continue to improve our current culture with a keen eye to the future."

The district "expressly denies any violations" of the law, according to the settlement.

Federal officials provided few details about what exactly happened at the Whitingham school, which, as of last year, served about 200 students in grades 6-12.

But investigators found that the district "knew of, and did not respond sufficiently to, individualized harassment and a broader hostile educational environment" since 2019, according to the press release.

Federal law enforcement officials "identified instances of targeted peer harassment and

pervasive documented use of derogatory epithets and comment based on students' race, sex, sexual orientation and sex stereotypes," officials said. "Because the school district did not sufficiently address these instances students were deprived of equal access to the educational opportunities the district provided."

In 2021, the Vermont chapter of the ACLU filed a complaint with the state's Human Rights Commission alleging that Twin Valley administrators mishandle multiple incidents of racist abuse and harassment targeting a Black student.

It's unclear whether federal officials were investigating those same allegations.

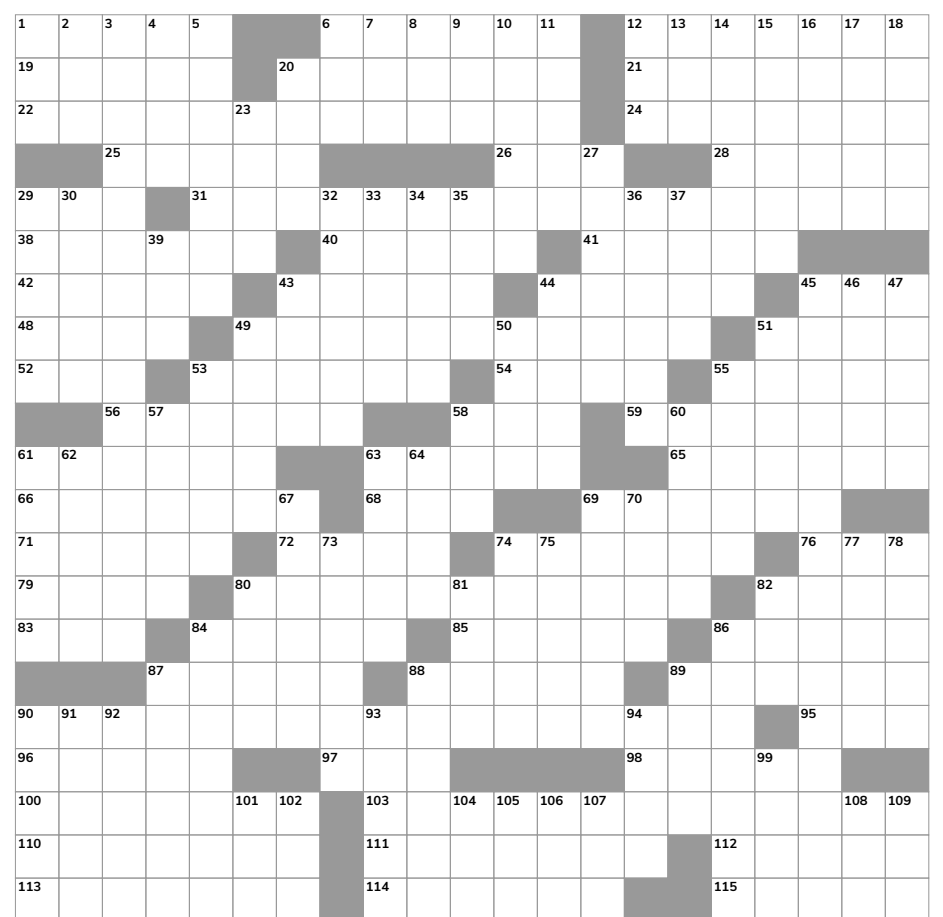
BRENDAN EMMETT QUIGLEY THE COMMONS CROSSWORD "Cross Swords"

Across

- Chocolate syrup brand
- Key components?
- It locates local businesses
- Itsy-bitsy bits
- Salad bar green
- Place to watch the big game
- Hits Amazon while commuting?
- Brazil's national soccer team
- Matter
- Three-day weekend eve, maybe: Abbr.
- Actor Delon
- Furniture wood
- Scribbles from Oz?
- Sun blockers
- Spine-tingling
- Zachary Taylor and party
- Fingernail file material
- Calcutta's nation
- All worked up
- In a blue state
- ___-level (impressive)
- Buffy's dessert?
- Alexa's rival
- Brief moment
- Locales
- Adhesive
- Illuminated from below
- Last name in publishing
- Fauxhawk requirement
- They're from around here
- "There was no other option"
- Glowing look
- ___ Dan
- Titular woman in a George Bernard Shaw play
- Moppet
- Like violent films
- City of northern Illinois
- Award named after a Muse
- Trail balloon
- Plant gunk
- Aweater's opposite
- Request from the bathrooms?
- 2005 Beck single
- Marks with two lines
- Harris's predecessor
- Osprey cousins
- Singer Foley who duetted with Meat Loaf
- Chocolate shade
- Disentangle
- Channel that reruns classic sitcoms
- Fork-tailed birds amid mud?
- 101 helpers: Abbr.
- Comic strip square
- Polished off
- Detected down a member
- Popular clique
- Steal wallpaper removers?
- "Bye, ___!" (dismissive send-off)
- New Hampshire lake or town
- Falcon's home
- Wearing a robe
- "Help me out, buddy!"
- Further cut off

Down

- Some non-het folks
- "I'm impressed!"
- Procedures that turn boars into sows?
- Mafia boss
- Burial receptacle
- Concerning, initially, in texts
- "Whazzat?"
- Life time?
- Barbecue preparation
- QB Doug
- Actress Pieterse
- Morning hrs.
- Social media personality Addison
- Blow up
- Some Eastern Seaboard trains
- Birdy chatterbox
- Be of use
- They do grunt work
- Hill builders
- Responsibility to bear
- Open
- Roasters
- French actress Anouk
- Letter
- Brighten up the highlights
- Sign of spring
- Yarn spinner
- Visibly upset
- Refer to, as a source
- Uneaten morsel
- Seine sights
- Poker player's cry
- 538's Nate makes a mess?
- Shakespearean sprite
- Scatterbrained
- Young haddock
- Hearty bowlful
- Did some undercover work
- Luxurious sheet material
- Speak
- Comic Izzard
- Figured out
- September bloom
- Mountaineer's tool

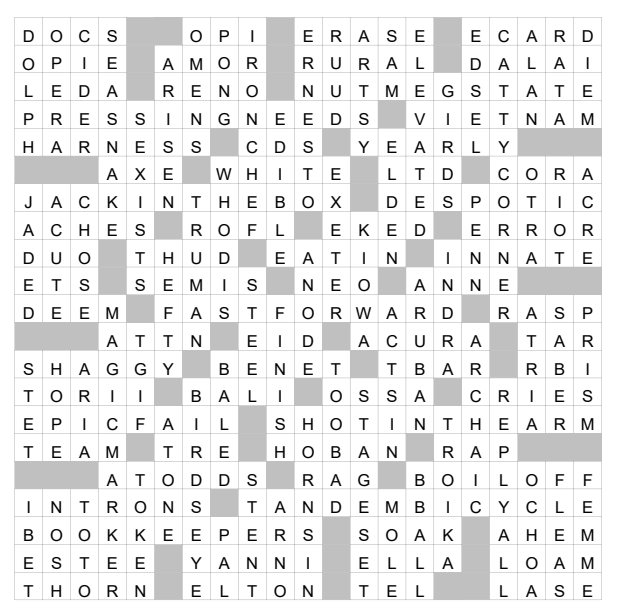


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- Berry of Hollywood
- Fence-crossing spot
- Not hot
- "Get busy ASAP!"
- Cash in
- Gastropub glassfuls
- The house for the familia
- Back and ___
- Johnson of "Inside the NBA"
- Big bowl
- Koi homes
- Like dry Spanish wines
- Like texts and e-mail
- Late start
- Painter with a "drip technique"
- Neither over nor under
- Man of the cloth
- Malaise
- "Star Trek" counselor
- Spruce (up)
- Paul whose #11 was retired by the Pirates
- The "A" of WASP
- Running the company servers, e.g.
- Pertaining to
- Fencer's blade
- Road 180, briefly
- Cushion
- Local farm share inits.
- Laotian money
- Staycation spot
- ___ Aviv-Jaffa
- Estuary
- Follow some threads?

Last issue's solution

"Soccer Talk"



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COLUMN | Sports Roundup

Never mind the snow banks, it's time for spring sports

High school teams ready to leave the gyms and get outside for a new season

Most of Windham County may have gotten whacked with an epic amount of snow in the March 13-15 storm, but the warm spring sun has whittled away at the snow in the hills and dried out the fields in the valleys.

After a couple of weeks of "gym ball," the local high school baseball and softball teams are ready to get outside. The grass will be brown and there will be a snowbank or two still lurking, but weather permitting, the baseball, softball, lacrosse, tennis, track & field, and Ultimate disc seasons should begin on time.

- The Brattleboro softball team will get its season going on Thursday, April 6, at 4:30 p.m., when they host Hoosac Valley at Sawyer Field. Bellows Falls will wait a week before they play on Thursday, April 13, at 4:30 p.m., when they host White River Valley. Leland & Gray also plays its opener on April 13; they will be in West Rutland for a 4:30 p.m. game. Twin Valley will begin its season on Thursday, April 27 in North Clarendon with a 4:30 p.m. game against Mill River.

- Bellows Falls kicks off the baseball season on Saturday, April 8, at noon, at Hadley Field against Otter Valley, and then plays host to Brattleboro on April 13, at 4:30 p.m., in the Colonels' season opener. Also on April 13, at 4:30 p.m., Leland & Gray travels to Proctor for its opening game. Twin Valley returns to a varsity schedule this season with its opener set for Tuesday, May 2 at Baker Field in Wilmington against Stratton Mountain School.

- Brattleboro's lacrosse teams will start next week, with the Colonel girls hosting Hartford at Natowich Field on Wednesday, April 12, at 4:30 p.m., while the Colonel boys travel to Manchester on April 13 to face Burr & Burton in a 4 p.m. game.

- Tennis gets started on Monday, April 10, when the Bellows Falls girls host Rutland for a 4 p.m. match at the Hadley Field courts. On April 13, the Brattleboro girls travel to Hartford for a 4 p.m. match. The Brattleboro boys start their season on Tuesday, April 25 in Manchester against Burr & Burton.

- Brattleboro's track & field team has its first meet on April 8 at Mount Anthony in Bennington, while Leland & Gray's squad has its opening meet on Tuesday, April 11 at Burr & Burton in Manchester. Bellows Falls has their first meet on April 12 at Windsor.

- Ultimate disc gets underway on April 13 when Brattleboro hosts Burr & Burton at Natowich Field for a 4:30 p.m. match. On Saturday, April 15, at 11 a.m., Leland & Gray hosts Mill River in Townshend. Bellows Falls won't be fielding a team this season.

Trout season begins April 8

- Vermont's trout fishing season opens Saturday, April 8, and despite lingering snow cover in some areas of the state, the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department says anglers can still have fun and be successful early in the season if they keep a few strategies in mind.

"Just like any other time of year, anglers fishing early in the



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT/COMMONS FILE PHOTO

Indoor practices, such as this one in the Leland & Gray gym in 2017, are a necessity with Vermont's weather. Weather permitting, the spring high school sports season for baseball, softball, track & field, lacrosse, tennis, and Ultimate disc begins later this week.



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.

spring should adjust their tactics based on conditions," State Fisheries Biologist Shawn Good said in a news release. "Trout will become more active with warmer water temperatures. If you can find a good location and present your bait or lure without spooking the trout, you'll have a good chance of catching a few fish, and enjoy a nice day outside."

Good adds that finding a small to medium low-elevation river or stream that is not too murky from spring runoff can be key. Trout are coldblooded and may be slow to bite especially with low water temperatures, so it is important that they can also see your bait, lure or fly.

Larger baits can often be more effective for enticing early-season trout into biting. Spin-anglers should try nightcrawlers, egg imitations, or bright colored spoons and spinners. Fly anglers may find success in the early season by drifting large, more visible flies such as wooly buggers, streamers, or San Juan worms along the bottom in slower pools and runs.

Trout will often hold close to the bottom in the deeper areas of streams during high flow conditions to conserve energy. Choose locations and tactics that allow you to fish using a slow retrieval right along the bottom. Focus on deep holes behind current breaks created by big boulders, downed trees or log-jams where trout may be resting. If possible, approach the hole from downstream as trout

will often orient themselves facing the current.

While Vermont offers excellent and diverse fishing opportunities for wild trout, stocking also occurs in many lakes, ponds, streams, and rivers where wild trout populations are low or absent. This generally happens in April and May each year once the ice has melted and following spring runoff. "Early in the season, like on opening weekend, you'll probably have more success if you focus on waters known to hold wild trout," said Good. "Despite unpredictable weather during early spring, each year anglers report catching impressive trout during opening weekend."

For more information, check out the 2023 Vermont Fishing Guide and Regulations, which is available free from license agents, or visit vtfishandwildlife.com.

Ski hill celebrates end of season with 'pond skimming' contest

- The folks who run the Brattleboro Ski Hill at Living Memorial Park wanted to get creative with celebrating a tremendous 2022-23 season, so they are hosting their first-ever season-closing pond skim event.

They are inviting skiers and snowboarders to come on Saturday, April 8, to participate and take a shot at skimming across a 25-foot long pond. Be ready to get wet, they said, "unless you have what it takes to ski/snowboard to the other side! Prizes and bragging rights will be available for all participants who can make it across the pond."

Registration at the Base Station and purchase of a \$5 lift ticket is required, but the contest is free to all. Registration begins at 1 p.m., with skimming beginning at 2 p.m. If under 18, you'll need a parent/guardian to sign a release form. Bring a dry change of clothes and towel. Free hot chocolate

will be available at the Ski Hill's warming hut, and everyone gets a Brattleboro Ski Hill sticker.

Recreation & Parks news

- The ice may be gone from Whitington Rink, but the skating continues. The Brattleboro Recreation & Parks Department will be hosting Friday Night Roller Skating every Friday night at the rink from April 7 through May 19. Join them, from 6 to 9 p.m., for a night full of roller skating and roller blading. Helmets and pads are recommended. You can bring your own roller skates or roller blades. Roller skates are available for rent for \$5, except on April 7.

Daily fees are \$3 for Brattleboro resident students, \$4 for Brattleboro resident adults, \$4 for non-resident students, and \$5 for non-resident adults. The snack bar will be open and various snacks will be available for purchase. No outside food or drinks allowed.

- If you don't know how to roller skate, or your skills are a little rusty, the Rec. Dept. and Ruth Shafer will offer lessons to both adults and youth prior to public roller skating time at Whitington Rink, starting on April 14.

Youth lessons for those 5-15 years old will take place from 5:30 to 6 p.m. (maximum of 8 kids), while adult lessons for those 16 and older will take place from 6 to 6:30 p.m. (maximum of 10 adults). The fee for lessons is \$35 for Brattleboro residents and \$50 for non-residents is \$50.

This is a beginner's program that will teach you the basics of how to safely stand, stop, and start, then work up to confident forward and backwards skating. Shafer is a local artist who grew up ice skating at the Brattleboro rink. She taught herself to roller skate during the pandemic and loves convincing people to try it out. Participants should bring their own roller skates/roller

blades. Helmets are required for all. Pads are recommended.

- The Rec. Dept. will again offer a track & field program this summer from June 20 to July 20. The program takes place on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings from 6 to 7 p.m. at the Brattleboro Union High School track area at Natowich Field.

This program is for youth aged 6-14. The fee is \$35 for Brattleboro residents and \$50 for non-residents. Participants will take part in various races and events from individual to small groups.

At the end of the season, participants have the option to participate in the Vermont Recreation & Parks Association track & field meet on July 22 in St. Johnsbury. Athletes aged 7-15 on Dec. 31, 2023 are eligible to participate in this year's meet. If the athlete was a freshman in high school during the current 2022-23 school year, they are not allowed to compete.

- The Vermont Voltage Soccer Academy returns to Brattleboro with two weeks of Voltage Soccer Camp for those 8 to 14 years old. This camp will be held at the West River Park Field on Route 30. Session one runs from July 10-14 from 9 a.m. to noon, and session two takes place July 31-Aug. 4 from 9 a.m. to noon.

The fee is \$175 for Brattleboro residents and \$190 for non-residents. Discounts are available if desired for multiple kids/weeks of Voltage Camp. If you would like the discounted price, call 802-254-5808 for more information. The discounts are not available for on-line registrations.

The camp offers an opportunity to learn and enjoy many aspects of the game of soccer in a fun yet competitive environment. Fundamentals, as well as sophisticated techniques of soccer, will be taught with an emphasis on the development, improvement, and refinement of basic playing skills. Everyone

needs to bring shin guards, a water bottle and snack, cleats/sneakers, sunscreen, and bug spray.

- Anyone interested in any of these programs can register online at register1.vermontsystems.com/wbws/vtbrattleboro.wsc/splash.html (**register1.vermontsystems.com/wbws/vtbrattleboro.wsc/splash.html?interfaceParameter=WebTrac_1**), or call the Rec. Dept.'s Gibson-Aiken Center office at 802-254-5808 for more information.

Senior bowling roundup

- In Week 11 of the winter/spring season of the Brattleboro Senior Bowling League at Brattleboro Bowl on March 30, The Markers (37.5-17.5) remained in first place. Fab Four (35-20) had a 5-0 week to move into second place ahead of Slo Movers (35.5-20.5), followed by Split Happens (25-30), The A-1's (24-31), The Strikers (22-33), Trash-O-Matic (21-34) and 10 Pins (21-34).

Debbie Kolpa had the women's high handicap game (233), while Roberta Parsons had the high handicap series (643). Robert Rigby again had the men's high handicap game (243), while Chuck Adams had the high handicap series (654). 10 Pins had the high team handicap game (880), while Split Happens had the high handicap series (2,487).

In scratch scoring, Chuck Adams led the men with a 654 series that featured games of 243, 212, and 199, while Rigby had a 622 series that featured games of 243 and 219. Warren Corriveau Sr. had a 594 series with games of 223 and 191, Marty Adams had a 544 series with a 207 game, and Gary Montgomery had a 519 series with a 194 game.

Carol Gloski had the women's high scratch game (169), while Shirley Aiken had the high scratch series (462). She also had a 162 game, while Kolpa rolled a 166.

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