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

Brattleboro police chief finds stories in the numbers

The statistics for the department's activities in 2023 show a snapshot of a community and a still-understaffed police department looking to take fresh approaches to problems

By Ellen Pratt and

Joyce Marcel
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—Norma Hardy looks at the town as “a very, very busy hive,” with the police chief noting that the Brattleboro Police Department (BPD) responded to 11,277 calls for services in 2023.

That's up almost 8% since last year, according to the BPD's 2023 Annual Report. But embedded in the numbers are difficult stories of a community, and Hardy took *The Commons* through the numbers in a recent interview, offering

some context about a still-understaffed police force adapting to providing public safety to residents of a fast-changing town that has barely emerged from a global pandemic with a range of problems.

“With 12,000 people in town, there's some of just about everything here,” Hardy said. “We do have to deal with violent crime in Brattleboro. And we do have to deal with sexual assaults. But we also deal with people just needing help.”

Hardy hopes that by explaining a bit about what's behind the numbers in her annual report, she

■ SEE POLICE STATISTICS, A3

SIT marks 60 years of educating 'global citizens'

Leahys will attend the celebration and will meet with refugees, as the nonprofit organization and college looks back at its roots of promoting cross-cultural understanding

By Fran Lynggaard Hansen
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—In 1961, President John F. Kennedy's brother-in-law, Sargent Shriver, was tapped to assist in training college-aged youth for the launch of Kennedy's Peace Corps program, leading to the establishment of the School for International Training (SIT) in 1964, which allowed university students to study abroad.

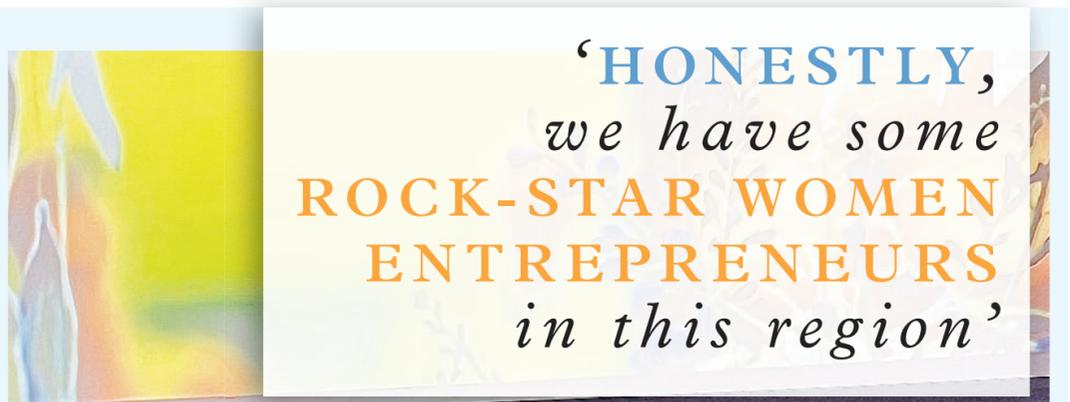
Now, 60 years later, SIT acts as the academic arm of World Learning, Inc., a global nonprofit focused on development and exchange with an umbrella of programming, educational opportunities, and training at home and abroad.

This week, the School for International Training will celebrate 60 years by “spotlighting the institution's unique history and its dynamic future as a 21st-century global university,” according to a news release.

Headlining the event, which will take place at their world headquarters on Kipling Road in Brattleboro on Friday, April 5, will be former U.S. senator Patrick J. Leahy and his wife Marcelle Leahy, who will speak about “their decades-long experiences and vision for Vermont's

future in the global landscape.” With the Experiment in International Living and the World Learning program under the same nonprofit corporate umbrella, this triad of worldwide educational opportunity is vast; each division was added to its repertoire of programs and services as the organization grew

■ SEE SIT TURNS 60, A6



Six women business owners reflect on their respective journeys, lessons, and triumphs

At an event that capped off Women's History Month and celebrated the contributions of women to the business community and to the region's economic landscape, six woman entrepreneurs told their stories. From left: Kirsten Beske, Melissa Boyles, Amanda Witman, Jadziah DeRosia, Melissa Hessney Masters, and Noelle VanHendrick.

By Victoria Chertok
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—Building connection, sharing stories, and finding inspiration: such was the atmosphere at the Vermont Womenpreneurs Brattleboro Showcase on March 27.

During the evening, which marked the first time that the member-based organization in Burlington brought the event to southern Vermont, six women business

owners spoke to an audience of 75 women and five men, reflecting on their respective businesses, origins, and most important lessons from their journeys.

Mieko Ozeki is co-founder of Vermont Womenpreneurs and owns Radiance Studios, a content strategy and event production company based in Burlington.

“The idea of it came in 2017 when I left my full-time job,” Ozeki said. “I was in a negative space because I had a toxic boss and decided to go back to my side hustle and make it a full-time thing.”

Vermont Womenpreneurs started the next year with a gathering of 15 people in the library in Burlington.

“Over time, I met my co-founder, Bethany Andrews Nichols, who said, ‘We should do a science fair for businesses,’” Ozeki said.

It was a success. “Our first showcase sold out — we had 90 people in the room, and we haven't looked back in six years!” Ozeki said.

Over two years, the Vermont Women's

■ SEE WOMEN IN BUSINESS, A2

How 'Roosevelt's Tree Army' remade Vermont

In the 1930s, the men of the Civilian Conservation Corps built much of the recreation infrastructure we still are using today

By Robert F. Smith
The Commons

It was 91 years ago this week, on April 5, 1933, that President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) as part of his New Deal, a program intended to get people back to work during the Great Depression.

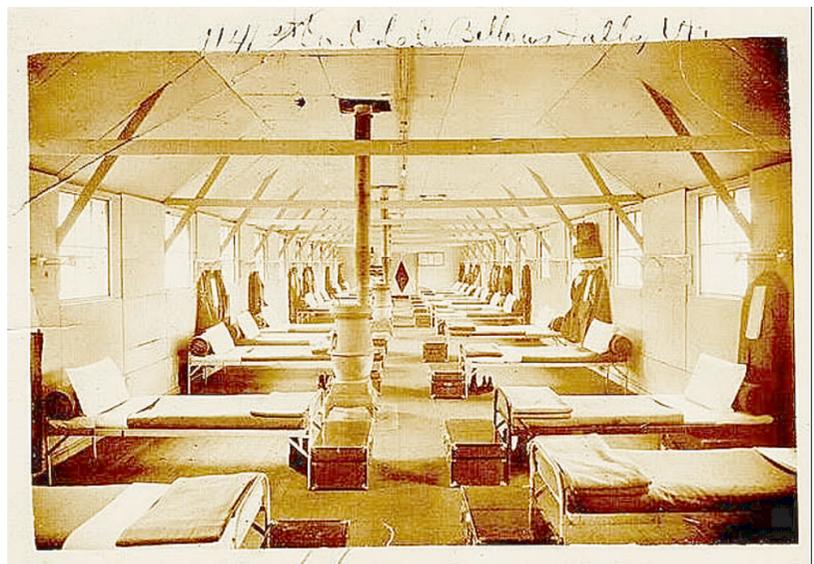
Anyone visiting state or national parks in the U.S. today still benefits from the work of the CCC. The program virtually created more than 700 state parks, and National Parks across

the country benefited from CCC workers.

When Roosevelt took office in 1933, unemployment nationwide was around 29%. In some parts of the country, it was at a staggering 80% or higher. By the time World War II put an end to the Great Depression, Roosevelt's New Deal programs had dropped unemployment to around 12%.

As its name suggests, the CCC was aimed specifically at providing manual labor for the conservation and development of natural resources in rural areas. It was originally called the

■ SEE CCC ANNIVERSARY, A5



The interior of one of the barracks at Camp Wilgus in North Westminster.

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139 Main St. (Hooker-Dunham Bldg.)
#601A — Newsroom
#604 — Business and Advertising
P.O. Box 1212, Brattleboro, VT 05302
888-511-5150 • fax 802-246-1319
commonsnews.org
Office hours by appointment

Jeff Potter
Editor-in-Chief

Kate O'Connor
Executive Director

EDITORIAL

NEWSROOM
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Olga Peters, Fran Lynggaard Hansen,
Robert F. Smith,
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vim

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Recognizing that a vigorous exchange of ideas and information allows democracy to function and is the lifeblood of a community, Vermont Independent Media:
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We welcome story ideas and news tips. Please contact the newsroom at news@commonsnews.org or at (802) 246-6397.

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

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

We do not publish unsigned or anonymous letters, and we only 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

Women in business

FROM SECTION FRONT

Fund conducted a survey to measure the impact of woman-owned businesses in the state, gleaming data from more than 3,400 of an estimated 10,000 woman-identified business owners and measuring their financial impact in the Green Mountain State.

That report concluded that these businesses “contribute \$2.4 billion to Vermont’s economy and generate almost 6,500 part-time and full-time jobs,” according to a summary of the report from the Vermont Community Foundation.

The report also painted a picture of women often launching businesses out of need and bootstrapping them because of a lack of access to conventional business loans.

“Women play an irreplaceable role in Vermont’s economy and historically they’ve been under-served, under-supported, and under-resourced,” said Erin Scaggs of the Downtown Brattleboro Alliance, the program director of Gallery Walk.

“It’s a big deal that organizations like [Vermont] Womenpreneurs and Vermont Women’s Fund aim to change that,” she added. “This was the first showcase event in southeastern Vermont, and honestly, we have some rock-star women entrepreneurs in this region.”

Called to work with people

Kirsten Beske (kirstenbeske.com), of Brattleboro, one of the six business owners who talked about their enterprises at the VTW Showcase, owns AProPositive LLC, a consulting and training practice. She also offers coaching services under her own name.

Beske’s company specializes in “helping mid-career women who are ready for a change to 1) redesign their lives, 2) love their work, and 3) live their purpose, without totally starting from scratch, going broke, or burning out,” she said.

Her very personal story included overcoming major challenges in 2001, around the time of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Her marriage ended, and she found herself working as a litigation attorney for over a decade.

But Beske said she was unfulfilled.

“One of the things that I realized is that I no longer loved litigation,” she said. “Pointless battles...for what?”

She said that she “did an inventory of my values and my purpose and decided that I was going to retire from my law practice. I felt very called to work with people.”

She earned a master’s degree in clinical psychology and for the next 10 years had a private practice that she described as making a difference in her clients’ lives.

Then she started a new business coaching mid-career women in the middle of big career or life changes. She found an immediate need for her new company.

“I wanted to help [clients] get more joy in their lives and help them find their core of authenticity so they [could] grow,” Beske said. “Once you get insight into

your life, you never know what will come up.”

She said she hopes “as women continue to expand their spheres of influence in visible positions of power and authority, it becomes more and more comfortable for women to expand into their fullest potential and contributions.”

And, she said, “the world is a better place with more diverse representation of all kinds at the top.”

A better way to birth

Melissa Boyles of Rise in Bloom (riseinbloom.com), based in Wilmington, has spent the last 10 years traveling, studying, teaching yoga, and making a business blossom from her intuition.

She talked about how she gave birth in Europe with a midwife and how she left the experience with a vision of a more sacred, ceremonial way to bring life into the world and transition into mothering.

“The deep, dark feeling I had giving birth the first time was not normal, but it’s been normalized,” Boyles said. “It is not a reflection of what is truly possible when mother and baby are supported by the community.”

“We are all born, and everyone has a birth story or two or three,” said Boyles, whose journey as a business owner began when she watched her mother run her own organic farm. “These stories impact our entire lives. Research is very clear that [the span of time] from conception to three years of life is the most important and lays out the template for health, disease, attachment, and how do we relate to and care for our living home.”

Untangling chaos

Consultant Amanda Witman (amandawitman.com) knows what it takes to work on a huge project — she worked on the statewide Everyone Eats program during the pandemic.

“I helped run the \$49 million Everyone Eats program here and across the state,” she said. “It’s amazing what can happen when people connect to create positive change.”

Witman said that living here for 20 years and being a single parent — of four homeschooled and now-grown children — impacted her life in countless ways.

Formerly a high-level executive assistant in a Fortune 500 company for many years, Witman has organized many events in her career.

Since she was dealing with some serious health challenges, she wanted to fit work in when she was feeling well, so she started her own company in 2017.

“In my consulting work, I help people and businesses untangle chaos, and make decisions and move forward confidently,” Witman said. “I help people get unstuck. I really love it!”

Witman, a singer, song leader, and instrumentalist, leads the monthly Brattleboro Pub Sing, the annual Northern Roots Festival, and other events centered around making music and harmony.

If you want something said, ask a man; if you want something done, ask a woman.

—MARGARET THATCHER

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AROUND THE TOWNS

Rasa String Quartet presents ‘Impressions: East Meets West’ at BMC

BRATTLEBORO — In a performance at the Brattleboro Music Center, the Rasa String Quartet will present “Impressions: East Meets West.” The concert, set for Friday, April 5, at 7 p.m., will include a joyful celebration of the Lunar New Year in Chen Yi’s “Shuo” and Jungyoon Wie’s “A Popular Tune.”

Also featured will be a fusion of East Asian folk music and the Western classical tradition, showcasing composers who embrace traditional folk music from around Asia, capturing the essence of each style through their own cultural lens. Performers are Maura Shawn Scanlin and Kiyoshi Hayashi, violin; Emma Powell, viola; and Mina Kim, cello.

Tickets are \$20 (\$25 at the door) and are available online at bmcvt.org, by calling 802-257-4523, or by emailing info@bmcvt.org.

Jesse Brody in concert at The River Garden

BRATTLEBORO — Jesse Brody, aka Lepkoff, winner of the 2022 Vermont Blues Society Challenge, will perform on Friday, April 5, from 7 to 9 p.m., at the River Garden Marketplace, 157 Main St.

The first set will feature Brody’s playing and singing bossa nova originals as well as classics by Jobim, Lyra, and others. The second set will feature originals and classics in the style of the 20s and 30s. Brody’s songs are described as having “the sophistication of art song or the knee-slapping earthiness of 1930s-style blues. His lyrics can be romantic or humorous, witty or ironic, depending on the song.”

‘Zorro,’ with live score, featured at Epsilon Spires

BRATTLEBORO — The silent swashbuckling classic film, *The Mark of Zorro*, live-scored by Ben Model, will be presented at Epsilon Spires on Friday, April 5, at 8 p.m.

This 1920 film, starring Douglas Fairbanks, launched the action-adventure movie genre, and even served as inspiration for the Batman comics. Fairbanks was “one of the silent screen’s biggest superstars and brought his unique charisma and athleticism to a string

pick-your-own-peonies and farm stays.

“Did you know that 80% of flowers we buy in U.S. are imported? To change this, I became a wedding florist and marketed the importance of locally grown flowers as sustainably as possible,” explained Hessney Masters, who launched the business in 2013.

But burnout became “a regular thing for me,” she said, and “in March 2020 I lost 80% of my revenue almost immediately and had to restructure the business.” Hessney Masters was able to do that restructuring in a way that she “could work half as many hours to take better care of myself.”

The farm stay became famous on Instagram, where Tanglebloom received great exposure. She hopes to expand on that success.

“We operate on less than 6 acres of nontraditional farm land, which means rocks,” Hessney Masters told the audience. “I’d like to help encourage the small farm industry to think outside the box,” she said.

Restoring hope
Noelle VanHendrick — whose unconventional job title is “gal chief” of ZPOTS (zpot.com), a small pottery studio in Brookline — talked about being a women entrepreneur, being a human, and being a creature.

“I am a work in progress, and I distill everything down to four words: risk, trust, help, and hope,” she said.

“When there is risk, there is stress,” VanHendrick said, calling stress “a navigational tool” to pinpoint “where in my business body needs some rejuvenating.” She called it “a sensation that sparks evolution” and that gives her direction, showing her “where to send those healing halos.”

“Trust: We really need to trust the moment that we find ourselves in as women and as human beings,” VanHendrick continued. “Visioning to the future — this is the moment of creation.”

“Help: It’s hard finding good help,” she said. “We are lucky at ZPOTS to have an amazing crew of creatures I call family

A local flower farm blooms

For Melissa Hessney Masters, owner of Tanglebloom (tanglebloom.com) in Brookline, it all started in 2010 when she was getting married and wanted to use local flowers. She couldn’t find them anywhere!

Today, Tanglebloom — the first community-supported agriculture business for flowers in Vermont — operates an education center and experienced-based flower farm and offers on-farm activities like

of mega-hits throughout the 1920s,” say organizers. Full of humor, stunts, sword fights, and action, *The Mark of Zorro* is “as entertaining and thrilling today as it was in its original release.”

The film will be presented with a live musical score performed by silent film accompanist Model, performing on Epsilon Spires’ historic Estey pipe organ. Model is a resident silent film accompanist for the Museum of Modern Art, the Library of Congress and, later this month, at the TCM Classic Film Festival. For tickets and more information, visit epsilonspires.org.

Committee hosts walk highlighting flood plain project

PUTNEY — On Saturday, April 6, from 1 to 3 p.m., join the Putney Wetland Stewardship Committee for a walk along the wetland portion of Sand Hill Road. Meet at the Sand Hill Road kiosk parking area.

The committee will show three town-proposed changes along the road intended to increase flood resiliency, Sacketts Brook floodplain access, and to improve wildlife habitat. The walk will provide onsite context for a presentation of the three options by Fitzgerald Environmental Associates on Thursday, April 18, at 6:30 p.m. at the Putney Public Library. Rain date for the walk is Sunday, April 7, at 1 p.m.

Health care advocates to meet

SPRINGFIELD — Everyone is invited to the Vermont Workers’ Center’s “Health Care Is a Human Right Tour” on Saturday, April 6, at 1 P.M. at the Huber Building, 80 Main St.

According to a news release, the event seeks to find out “how the current health care payment system has affected your life, share what we have learned about why it is like it is, and talk about how we can change it.”

The Vermont Workers’ Center describes itself as “a statewide organization of everyday people fighting for economic justice and human dignity.” For further information about the event, call 802-624-6116.

Order by April 9 for Chester’s 2024 Tree/Shrub Sale

CHESTER — Chester Townscape’s annual Tree and Shrub Sale has begun. This

event offers good-sized, proven trees and shrubs at below regular nursery retail prices to help people beautify their properties.

Here are the seven 2024 shrub selections offered:

- Red Sprite winterberry (female for berries).
- Jim Dandy winterberry (male pollinator).
- Little Quick Fire hydrangea.
- Autumn Brilliance shadblush.
- Dwarf buttonbush.
- Firelight hydrangea.
- PJM Elite rhododendron.

All specimens are hardy and low maintenance, feature multi-season interest, and sport beautiful blossoms. Most are native. All appeal to pollinators and/or birds. Any one of these plants would also make a wonderful present.

Proceeds from the sale support Chester Townscape’s charitable civic projects, such as the floral pots and bridge boxes that beautify the town for residents and visitors.

Buyers do not have to be Chester residents; but they do have to preorder and pay before April 9, then pick up the shrubs in early May from Main Street in central Chester. For more information, visit chestervt.gov/chestertownscape.html or contact Lillian Willis at 802-875-1340 or lbwillisct@comcast.net.

Senior Solutions, Windham Aging host listening session

WILMINGTON — Senior Solutions and Windham Aging are jointly hosting a listening session on the cost of living for seniors in the community on Thursday, April 11, from noon to 1:30 p.m., at the Old Firehouse, 18 Beaver St.

Organizers say this listening session is a community conversation to learn about and share thoughts on the needs, concerns, and ideas for caring for our older population.

“Residents face changing needs as they get older,” they said in a news release. “The community will need more health care, adapted or different housing, help with transportation, more caregivers, and new ways of social engagement. The community needs to work together to share our ideas about how to adapt — both personally and with the organizations that serve Windham County.”

Windham Aging has been holding a series of listening sessions throughout Windham County over the past few months. More are scheduled in the coming months.

which includes Eric Hendrick, my husband.”

“Hope: I woke up one morning and I was done with hope — I found it really doubtful. Humanity needs to evolve, so I went to the studio and declared that I was done with hope.”

ZPOTS had been making and selling pottery labelled “A Bucket of Hope” and “A Cup of Hope.” Hendricks removed them from the website.

She received messages and calls requesting the return of buckets and cups of hope to the website and inventory.

“I had several deep conversations with customers and family and found that hope is necessary — so we decided to reinstate hope,” VanHendrick said with a laugh.

“Because as much love that we experience, there is as much despair and desperation and suffering,” she added. “Hope is first rung on the ladder when you are sliding into depths of despair.”

“I work in a paradigm of love — leading with my heart — and the rest of my body is unified,” she said.

DBA, an event partner

Kate Trzaskos, executive director of the Downtown Brattleboro Alliance, was in attendance and told *The Commons*, “Building on the success of two She Means Business events in partnership with the Vermont Women’s Fund last year, the DBA jumped at the opportunity to partner with Vermont Womenpreneurs to host a showcase in Brattleboro.”

She observed that “there are so many strong woman business owners in our region, and convening them to share their stories is a powerful experience,” and she hopes it is “the first of many such events.”

“The DBA is committed to building an entrepreneurial pipeline for downtown as we build the future of Main Street with more representation of our diverse community,” Trzaskos said. “This means more networking events, more skill building, and more resources for entrepreneurs.”



A sign inside the Brattleboro police station encourages patrol officers.

Police statistics

can help to alleviate any “feeling of foreboding” one might feel seeing its data.

Traffic stops and calls about suspicious persons comprised 25% of all calls last year.

The police handled 1,525 “suspicious person/circumstance” calls last year, 3% more than the year before. “What’s suspicious to you may not be suspicious to me,” Hardy said. “We don’t say that anything is a definite until we’ve investigated it.”

Hardy gave an example of someone walking alone through town and yelling. She agrees that some may find this behavior frightening or threatening and call the police, but her team wants to understand the situation.

“We go and talk to the person and see if they’re OK,” Hardy said. “Do they need help? We talk to them a little bit more, and see what kind of services we can offer them, if any, and whether they’ll accept them.”

“Our job is a combination of everything from social services to police services, to referral services,” Hardy added. “No call is ever the same.”

“If we have a person who goes into a business and just continuously walks around the business but doesn’t purchase anything, or maybe is just hanging out there, or leaves and comes back — that kind of activity — the business owner may feel that that may be suspicious to them,” Hardy explained. “So they may call it in.”

Or, she said, “someone is walking through a parking lot looking into cars. It could be someone who’s just lost, and you don’t want to jump to conclusions.”

Hardy has been promoting the use of the Neighbors by Ring phone app, which allows users to share information, including videos captured with home security systems and video doorbell devices, with BPD about suspicious activity. Her staff has been able to solve some crimes in town with video footage uploaded to the police department through the app.

Traffic stops are up

Brattleboro police made 1,290 traffic stops last year, up 17% since 2022.

“We get a lot of reports of people running stop signs, driving past stopped school buses with their lights on, and drag racing,” Hardy said.

Hardy trusts her officers to exercise discretion and to treat everyone with professionalism and fairness.

“There’s always a reason when someone is being stopped,” she said. “We give lots of warnings. We understand that not everyone can afford to pay for a ticket. We understand that not everyone can afford to take care of the issue with their car. If it’s not something that makes the car so dangerous that we have to take it off the road, then we will give you time to correct the issue. We do that quite often.”

While general theft in town has decreased by 14% since 2022, reports of retail theft have increased by 10%.

Hardy said her staff is familiar with a small number of individuals who take up most of the department’s time and resources. “They trespass all over town,” she said.

Assistant Chief Jeremy Evans works with agencies such as Groundworks Collaborative and Health Care and Rehabilitation Services (HCRS) to try to provide the help that many of these people need.

“Some people in the throes of addiction are engaging in criminal activity, but that doesn’t mean they’re inherently criminals,” Hardy said. “Maybe if we can get them help, they would no longer be committing these acts,” she said. “We’ve had success at getting some folks to accept services.”



Brattleboro Police Chief Norma Hardy: “I started doing police work because I wanted to be of service.”

Drugs remain a big problem

Hardy began her law enforcement career 32 years ago with the Police Department of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, retiring as assistant chief. Prior to that she worked in New York City as an EMT, at a time when crack was in heavy use.

“I started doing police work because I wanted to be of service,” Hardy said.

Now, she wants to help Brattleboro with its drug problem.

While alcohol leads the list of the top five drugs involved in incidents investigated by the police, with 265 calls in 2023, the next four drugs put together — heroin, crack, fentanyl, and cocaine — outnumber it, with 334 calls in total.

Drugs are “such an intense subject,” Hardy said, which “can be overwhelming, so we tend to look for the easiest route to deal with it. But the problem is complicated. We have to look at why someone has become addicted and then delve deeper into why they remain addicted.”

Hardy has built trust with people who struggle with substance abuse.

“I’ve had people call me and talk for hours,” she said. “They talk about how hard it is to just survive one day to the next. They may be off the streets, in a hotel, but that’s basically it. Nothing else is working for them.”

Such callers tell her that the hardest thing for them is to distance themselves from drugs, “because there’s so much out there,” she said.

BPD is a partner in Project CARE (Community Approach to Recovery and Engagement), a partnership developed in 2018 in response to the public health emergency caused by the opioid epidemic. Project CARE aims to reduce the impact of opioid use on the town and its residents, reduce the number of drug deaths, and connect people with recovery support.

Project CARE partners include Turning Point, Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, Groundworks Collaborative, Habit OPCO, Brattleboro Retreat, HCRS, and the Vermont Department of Probation and Parole.

The BPD takes a nuanced view of how drugs are affecting the community.

People in the grip of drugs may steal packages from porches or go through cars. Hardy calls these “quality-of-life” crimes.

“But then there are the professional drug dealers.

“For someone who has decided that their line of work will be to

sell drugs, then that’s when we need to act,” Hardy said. “We need to do our jobs as the police. And our job is to stop them from doing that.”

In 2023, officers responded to 82 overdose incidents, and of those that were fatal, the majority involved fentanyl. Hardy said her officers administered Narcan (naloxone), a drug that reverses the effects of opioid overdose, on 43 occasions last year.

That work takes its toll. “It’s so rare for anyone to ask how my officers are doing in having to respond to deaths,” Hardy said. “I have to be an advocate for their mental health. I now have a therapist on retainer for the department.”

Staffing still an issue

Hardy has made staffing a priority. She began the job in a department gutted with vacancies, with only about half of its full police force of 27 officers on the job. The department now employs 18 officers.

Recruits undertake 30 weeks of training at the Vermont Police Academy before beginning with the force. BPD recently enrolled seven recruits, but two did not complete the course.

“We hope that everyone that we send to the academy passes,” Hardy said, “but I say that two [dropping out] is not a disappointing number. The police academy is a hard adjustment for people, physically and mentally. They put you through a lot of grueling tasks.”

Years ago, Brattleboro would send recruits for training only to have them leave the force two years later for a better-paying job. Hardy maintains that this is no longer the case.

“I have not had anyone leave under those kinds of circumstances,” she said, noting that the town is “very competitive” with other towns when it comes to police officer compensation.

“I’ve had people leave, of course, because that’s just life,” Hardy said. “But I have not heard of them leaving and transferring to other departments.”

Quality Inn is a hot spot

With the largest volume of vehicular traffic and the biggest concentration of commercial establishments in town, Putney Road and Canal Street were the top locations for police responses last year. Much of the response was focused on traffic accidents, trespassing, and retail theft.

Hardy noted that her officers responded to calls from the Quality Inn on Putney Road 244

times last year. Police responses included citizen assistance, arrests for theft, and response to complaints.

The Quality Inn continues to participate in Vermont’s pandemic-era emergency shelter program, launched in response to Covid in 2020. The program is slated to end this June, but at the peak of the pandemic more than 250 households were sheltering in local motels, including seven in Brattleboro. Most of the program participants from Brattleboro found themselves at the Quality Inn.

Almost since the inception of the program, participants have complained about conditions in motels across the state. An inspection of the Quality Inn in December by the Vermont Division of Fire Safety, the Vermont Public Health Department, and Brattleboro’s assistant fire chief found the owner, Anil Sachdev, in violation of health and fire codes.

A follow-up inspection in January revealed that some of the violations had been addressed.

“I have been talking about the Quality Inn to whoever would listen to me,” said Hardy. “When I went through, I was aghast at the condition of the building: the rugs, the walls, children walking through the lobby. Things need to be cleaned.”

“What I found needs to be talked about,” Hardy added. “People who live there are in distress. It’s not just the Brattleboro Police Department that’s going to be able to fix all of this. But maybe if we all work together we can make it better.”

Is Brattleboro safe?

“I can say that Brattleboro is a safe place to live and visit,” Hardy said, “but someone’s perception is their reality. I take your fear seriously. If you are afraid, I ask why. Because maybe I can give you specific information about things that we’ve changed, and I can relieve you of some of your fear.”

Referring to the department’s annual report, which is posted in the 2023 Brattleboro Annual Town Report (bit.ly/759_bratt_annual_report_2023) on the town website (brattleboro.gov), Hardy said, “It’s really good that the public sees these numbers, sees what their police department is doing. Some people think we do nothing. They might see an officer looking at their phone, but that’s their work phone so they’re looking to see what their next job is. But God forbid if they stop and have a doughnut.”

“I don’t even like doughnuts!” Hardy exclaimed.

MOOVer to expand service

A pilot program in Brattleboro will operate later on weeknights for riders who book trips in advance

BRATTLEBORO — Southeast Vermont Transit (SEVT, aka the MOOVer) and the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC) announce the start of a new microtransit service in Brattleboro on April 15.

According to SEVT CEO Randy Schoonmaker, microtransit “is a system like Uber with a van.”

This new service is nicknamed the MicroMOO2; the original MicroMOO service is operated in Windsor. It will run from 5 to 11:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays, and is free of charge and open to everyone.

Trips must start and end within the town of Brattleboro, must be booked in advance, and cannot be hailed along the street. The vehicle is a seven-seat, lift-equipped, all-wheel-drive Ford Transit with the distinctive Holstein graphics.

An app and a PC-based portal called QRYde will be used to book rides, or riders can call the SEVT office at 888-869-6287 until 4:45 p.m. from Monday to Friday to arrange a trip or multiple future trips.

Schoonmaker said the service is designed to complement Brattleboro’s existing three-fixed-route bus system, which enjoys very high ridership. Those routes end between 5 and 5:45 p.m., so the MicroMOO2 service is designed to pick up where the fixed routes leave off.

It is hoped that riders will use the system for medical appointments, shopping, employment (particularly for second- and third-shift staff), after-school activities, and municipal or social events.

SEVT’s other microtransit service, the MicroMOO in Windsor, has been operating from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. midweek since January 2023. Ridership for the first 12 months was 6,693 and is averaging 29 rides a day. Brattleboro’s hoped-for average is 50 rides per day. Windsor is one of five microtransit pilots funded by the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans).

The BDCC is funding 100% of the cost with a grant from the Northern Borders WIOA Dislocated Worker National Reserve Demonstration program. That funding is projected to last until December 2024.

Schoonmaker said SEVT has applied for additional funding from the town of Brattleboro Human Services Program, and SEVT will apply for funds from VTrans this spring in an effort to continue the program past the end of this year. If no other funds become available, the program will cease operations.

“The MOOVer is so fortunate to have the support of the BDCC, the town of Brattleboro and our riders,” said Schoonmaker. “We look forward to the launch and we are already working on additional funding sources to continue this program, which has the potential to positively impact the quality of life in Brattleboro.”

Public meetings on how to use the system and the app will be held before April 15 at times and places to be announced. For more information go to moover.com/brattleboro-microtransit.

Art has to move you and design does not, unless it’s a good design for a bus. —DAVID HOCKNEY

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PUBLIC NOTICES

Town of Brattleboro Recreation and Parks Dept. Request for Proposals

The Town of Brattleboro Recreation and Parks is seeking a concessionaire to operate the Snack Shack at Living Memorial Park (Swimming Pool & Skating Facility) along with West River Park.

Upon acceptance the concessionaire will be required to provide the necessary insurances and licenses such as Liability, Workman’s Compensation, Town of Brattleboro Food License, and a Vermont Health Department License.

The deadline for proposals is Friday, April 19 at 10:00 AM. Proposals may be sent to Brattleboro Recreation and Parks Dept PO Box 513 Brattleboro, VT 05301. Please mark your bid package Concession Bids.

For further information please call Carol Lolatte, Recreation and Parks Director at the Recreation and Parks Department at 802-254-5808.

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MILESTONES

Births, deaths, and news of people from Windham County

Obituaries



• **Pamela G. "Pam" Chickerling, 82**, of West Chesterfield, New Hampshire. Died March 27, 2024, in the

comfort of her home surrounded by her family, following a lengthy and courageous battle with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. Pam was born in Brattleboro on Jan. 15, 1942, the daughter of Murray and Mabel (Young) Gould. She attended Brattleboro schools, was a graduate of Brattleboro Union High School, Class of 1960, and went on to attend Concord (N.H.) Hospital School of Nursing, receiving her diploma in Nursing. As a mother of four children, she proudly served as a leader in the PTA at Chesterfield Elementary School, as well as a den leader for the Cub Scouts. She worked for many years at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital as a staff RN (ER, Med-Surg, OB-GYN), and worked in the medical office of Dr. R. Keith Clarke. She used her skill as a nurse in later years, as the emergency nurse at Hinsdale Racetrack, staff RN at Thompson House & Hilltop House in Brattleboro, and as assistant manager at Vernon Hall. She gave comfort care to the terminally ill as a private duty nurse. Instead of retirement, Pam took on the role of training those interested in healthcare by teaching LNA classes for the American Red Cross. One of her favorite (and most impactful lessons) was the importance of not putting a bedpan on a patient's tray table, as it was the same place they put their cookies. (Cue clanging 2 bedpans together for emphasis!) In a book of handwritten stories, she notes that her most rewarding job was being a mother and wife. Coming in at a close second was a winning day at the casino, chatting with close friends and family, and sipping on an ice-cold Awful Awful (awful thick, awful good!) milkshake. She became engaged on Nov. 23, 1962 and was married on Aug. 31, 1963 to Richard G. Chickerling, Jr., at All Souls Church in Brattleboro. They celebrated 50 years of marriage in August 2013. She is survived by sons Mark (Jennifer) Chickerling of Grantham, New Hampshire and Duane (Stacy) Chickerling of West Chesterfield; daughters Christine (Paul) DiGeronimo of Warner, New Hampshire and Karen (Dan) Todd of West Chesterfield; and nine grandchildren, one great-grandchild on the way, and one niece, Kimberly Miller. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: Committal services and burial in Chesterfield West Cemetery will take place later this spring to be announced by the funeral home. Donations to the Windham Regional Career Center, Attention: Joyce Rathbun (Health Careers Program), 80 Atwood St., Brattleboro, VT 05301. To offer condolences to the family, visit atamaniuk.com.

• **Rohr Bryan Cook, 62**, of Westminster. Died peacefully after a brief illness, surrounded by his loving family and the comforting sounds of Pink Floyd, on March 21, 2024. He was born in Philadelphia to John and Gloria (Parker) Cook. He grew up in Gageville and graduated from Bellows Falls Union High School in 1979. He had two children, Parker and Ashley, with his former spouse, Deborah (Rounds) Lique. Over his long career in construction, he built everything necessary for running a town: schools, libraries, banks, churches, and countless homes. He even worked on a castle. Rohr was an adventurer at heart. In his childhood and

teen years, he would often rope his brother, Chris, into schemes, once ending in the Coast Guard having to save them off the coast of Maine. When his children were young, he would tell his family to pack their bags and proceed to take them on a mystery trip not realizing the destination until they had arrived. In his youth, he may have driven his car on the frozen Connecticut River (who's to say?) He once braved the skies with his son, Parker, during a skydiving excursion. If Rohr ever mentioned knowing a shortcut when driving, the shortcut always took twice as long, but it was sure to be an adventure. A devoted son, Rohr had a tradition of giving his mother a rose bush every Mother's Day, continuing until her yard could hold no more. He made it a point to call his parents daily. He taught his kids how to ski, the fine art of avoiding trees when riding an overly greased runner sled, and the importance of creative problem-solving. In his retirement, Rohr enjoyed helping his children with projects, reading stacks of books from the library, bragging about his grandchildren, and cherishing moments with his faithful dog, Charlie. He is survived by his parents and his siblings — Christopher Cook and his wife, Cheryl, and Melissa Martin and her husband, Keith; his children: Parker Cook and his wife, Sunya, and Ashley Cormack and her husband, Alex; grandchildren Evy Cook and Danny Cormack; and his girlfriend, Marilyn Bresland. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: Visiting hours will take place on Sunday, April 14, from noon until 2 p.m., at Fenton & Hennessey Funeral Home, 55 Westminster St., Bellows Falls. A memorial service will start at 2 p.m. at the funeral home, followed by a reception at the Moose Club. Donations to the Butterfield Library in Westminster.



• **Elizabeth Elaine "Betty" Ellison, 83**, of Hinsdale, New Hampshire. Died March 26, 2024, at Pine

Heights nursing home in Brattleboro following a period of declining health. Betty was born in Brattleboro on March 28, 1940, the daughter of Howard and Catherine (Lindsey) Tudor. She grew up in the lower South Main Street area, attending Canal Street School, and graduated from Brattleboro Union High School, Class of 1958. She worked most of her career as a legal secretary for several Brattleboro area attorneys that included the late Edward John. Later, she worked in the Public Defenders' Office in Brattleboro, which she retired from following several years of faithful service. Betty enjoyed trips to the area casinos and loved playing Bingo every week with her beloved aunt, Marion Longueil. Betty was well known for her pleasant, easy-going personality and spirit of friendship. On Dec. 31, 1987 in Brattleboro, she married Richard E. Ellison, who predeceased her on March 5, 2016. Survivors include nine first cousins: Shirley King, Janice Bristol, Linda LeClair, Peggy Scott, Robert Lindsey, James Lindsey, Debbie Langlois, John Lindsey, and Carolyn Ross. Additionally, she leaves a host of friends that include Mike Gillis and Christine Dunleavy. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: In keeping with her final wishes, there are no formal funeral services scheduled. Betty will be buried next to her beloved husband in East Clarendon (Vt.) Cemetery. Donations to the Windham County Humane Society, P.O. Box 397, Brattleboro, VT 05302. To offer condolences, visit atamaniuk.com.



• **Lenita Ruth Harris, 75**, of Hinsdale, New Hampshire. Died March 25, 2024, in the comfort of her home surrounded by her family, following a brief battle with cancer. Lenita was born in Burnet, Texas, on August 17, 1948, the daughter of Malcolm and Clara (Warden) Pafford. She was raised and educated in Texas and was a graduate of Burnet High School, Class of 1966. On Jan. 23, 1968, in Burnet, Texas, she married to Kenneth P.T. Harris, who survives. She was employed as a classification specialist at the Holstein Association in Brattleboro, which she retired from in 2011 following 32 years of faithful and dedicated service. In conjunction with her full-time position at the Holstein Association, Lenita was a faithful and devoted wife and loving mother and grandmother whose life centered around her family. She was known for her big heart and quiet spirit of generosity. Year-round, she shopped for the Toys for Tots Program, usually amassing three full large bags of toys by the time the Christmas season arrived. She couldn't bear the thought of a child not having a toy under the Christmas tree. For several years, she served as a Brownie leader for the Girl Scouts of America program in Hinsdale. Lenita enjoyed playing golf with her husband and friends at the former Pine Grove Springs Country Club in Spofford, New Hampshire. She also enjoyed both vegetable and flower gardening, always looking forward to spring planting. Of her other interests, she was an avid reader, enjoyed knitting, and time spent with her family. One very memorable highlight in her life was an RV road trip along the Eastern Seaboard from New York to Key West, Florida, with the final destination being her hometown of Burnet, Texas. Traveling with the couple were her sister-in-law and brother-in-law, Doris and Jay Shaffer of Willow Spring, North Carolina. Lenita always considered Doris a sister. Besides her husband of 56 years, she leaves two daughters, Kimberly Fortier (Conrad) of West Brattleboro and Kelly Harris Gabriel, also of West Brattleboro; two brothers, Clyde Pafford of Burnet and Lennon Davidson of Bertram, Texas; a sister, Bobbi Startzel of Round Rock, Texas; grandchildren Madison Fortier, Tarah Gabriel, Logan Fortier, and Jake Gabriel; and many nieces and nephews. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A memorial gathering was held at the Millstream Community Center in Hinsdale on March 30. In memory of her beloved pet Maltese "Missy," memorial contributions in Lenita's name may be made to Windham County Humane Society, P.O. Box 397, Brattleboro, VT 05302. To offer condolences, visit atamaniuk.com.

the suggestion of her brother, Tony, who was working for Audio Visual Education slide shows. She closely followed, working for Dorothy Podesta at Guidance Associates. Margo studied at the Art Students League and Parsons School of Design in New York City. From there, Margo secured a job in the graphic design department at Scholastic Magazine. She also did freelance work for many designers she met along the way. Margo was an avid skier. In 1992, after her parents died, Margo moved to New England, where she had friends. She lived in Spofford, New Hampshire, and Saxtons River and Bellows Falls. She worked for a while at Church & Main in Keene. It was hard to find work as a graphic designer at this time because the commercial art business became computerized, and Margo did not, so she began to paint and to make quilts. Margo's wit, humor, and creativity were a source of inspiration to her friends. She had a marvelous fashion sense and was a wonderful cook and gardener. She found ways to garden even when living in a small apartment. Later in life, she had a keen interest in playing bridge. She was an excellent conversationalist in all aspects of art: film, literature, music, and visual art. She is greatly missed. Margo is survived by her brother and sister-in-law, Brett Anthony and Gaylon Palmer; nephew Ian Palmer-Anthony, niece Miranda Palmer-Anthony, and grandniece and nephew Jayden Palmer and Jordan Baker, all of Fair Oaks, California. She is also survived by her sister, Jane Hrubec, of Cold Spring, New York, and many friends. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: No services are planned at this time.



• **Margo Hrubec, 76**, of Bellows Falls. Died peacefully in her home on March 7, 2024, after a long illness. She was

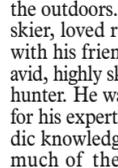
born to Beatrice and Anthony Andrew Hrubec at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City on June 25, 1947. Art was always at the center of her life. Her elder sister, Jane, taught her to sew, along with the master sewer, her father. Anthony Andrew was given a scholarship to Yale, but he needed to make a living, so he was a cook and waiter in the Yale kitchen and a tailor to his classmates. After high school, Margo went on an American Abroad trip to Europe for several years. When she returned, she worked

in Pleasantville, New York, on a friend, or a family member. He enjoyed puttering and doing chores around his home every day. Being a gifted mechanic, Dean could fix or repair just about anything. He was enjoying his retirement very much. On April 24, 2004, he met his future wife Sarah (Gochenour) in Brattleboro. They were married August 8, 2009, in an open field wedding ceremony in Dummerston. They spent a too-short 20 years together and Sarah now survives him. He will be forever missed. Besides his loving wife, he leaves many loving family members: his mother Lucy Hudock of Goshen, Connecticut; daughter Jen Bratko and husband Ben of Lincoln, Rhode Island; a brother, Drew Hudock and wife Kim of Newtown, Connecticut; his sister, Karolene Carlson and husband Clay of Cornwall Bridge, Connecticut; and his nieces and nephews Ryan Hudock and wife Stephanie, Kirsten Hudock, Gunner Carlson, and Hope Carlson. Dean was predeceased by his father. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A simple memorial service will take place at St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 7 Bolton Hill Rd., Cornwall, Connecticut, on Saturday, April 13, at 11 a.m. Afterward there will be a catered reception in celebration of his life. Some of Dean's ashes will be scattered around his favorite hunting grounds, and the rest will be laid to rest later in the springtime. To offer condolences, visit atamaniuk.com.



• **Dean Karl Hudock, 65**, of Brookline. Died unexpectedly at his home on March 23, 2024. Dean was born in Greenwich, Connecticut on Dec. 29, 1958, the son of Andrew and Lucy (Morano) Hudock. He was raised and educated in Greenwich, graduating from Greenwich High School, Class of 1977. He went on to attend Vermont College and later moved to Florida where he took aircraft power plant and airframe training, graduating with his associate's degree in aviation maintenance technology from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida. Upon graduation, Dean went to work for Sikorsky Aircraft in Stratford, Connecticut, as a helicopter mechanic in the hangar and on the flight field, a position he excelled at. He was a member of the Teamsters Union, and earned a reputation in the hangar for his meticulous and conscientious work in testing and maintaining the aircraft as part of flight operations. He likely worked on every single Blackhawk helicopter Sikorsky ever made over the years, and was known for catching problems that others missed. Dean retired from Sikorsky on March 5, 2021, following 35 dedicated years with the company. He fulfilled a lifelong dream of moving to Vermont permanently to spend time with his wife and family on his homestead. He loved the outdoors. He was an expert skier, loved riding motorcycles with his friend Jeff, and was an avid, highly skilled, lifelong deer hunter. He was also well known for his expertise and encyclopedic knowledge of firearms and much of the related military history as well. An unassuming man, Dean enjoyed helping others whether it be a neighbor,

Gertrude was born at home on August 25, 1916 in Hinsdale, New Hampshire to Polish immigrant parents Wojcieck "John Smith" Kazmierczak and Constance Sambraska Kazmierczak. She was raised in Ashuelot and attended grammar school there and graduated from Thayer High School in Winchester, New Hampshire. On March 2, 1935, in Winchester she married Frances J. Potash, who worked for her father at the Ashuelot Paper Mill. Together they had two daughters, Constance and Angeline, and moved to Putney in 1938 when her father "John Smith" purchased a paper mill and began the enormous task of refurbishing, renovating, and restarting the manufacturing of paper in the small town. Gertrude worked for many years with the family in the office at the Putney Paper Mill until the business was sold. After her retirement, she enjoyed traveling, cooking, playing golf, going to the casino, and spending time with her family and friends. Gertrude was predeceased by her husband, Frank in 1966, daughter Connie in 1981, daughter Ann in 2015, and her beloved pet, Harley, in 2023. She leaves behind four grandchildren, Ellen Williams and her husband, Joseph Wallace of Brattleboro, with whom she made her home for the past 12 years, Kelli Hanzalik and her husband, Joseph of Spofford, New Hampshire, Michael Bennett of Arizona, and Michael Mozier of East Dover; great-grandchildren Sarah Williams, Michael Rooney, Catherine Rooney, and Rachael Rooney; and numerous nieces and nephews. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A graveside service will be held on April 13, at 11 a.m., at Saint Michael's Cemetery in Brattleboro, with a reception to follow. To offer condolences to the family, visit atamaniuk.com.



• **Gertrude K. Potash, 107**, of Brattleboro. Died peacefully at home, in her sleep and surrounded by family, on March 15, 2024. At the time of her death, she was believed to be the oldest living person in Vermont.

• **Patrick K. "Pat" Kelly, 61**, of Bellows Falls. Died at home, surrounded by his family, on March 23, 2024, after a short illness. Pat was born on April 28, 1962, in Bellows Falls to the late Maurice and Loretta (Brooks) Kelly. He attended schools in Bellows Falls, graduating from Bellows Falls Union High School in 1980. Pat worked as a plumber in the Bellows Falls area for almost 40 years. In July 1996, he married Bridget (Stevens) who survives. His much-loved children, Hannah and Ryan, were his pride and joy. He is also survived by his sister, Kathleen Kelly, nephews Connor (Jessica), and Hunter, his brother, Brian Kelly (Darlene), and nephew, Brendan, and nieces Molly and Meagan, as well as several other cousins whom he enjoyed spending time with along with his mother-in-law, Margaret. Pat always had a big hug and kiss for everyone. He treasured his friendships and his Friday afternoon "marketing" time with them. He enjoyed family vacations, especially their trip to Ireland, sharing with Hannah and Ryan their Irish heritage. Pat was a long-time fan of Notre Dame Fighting Irish football and Boston Bruins hockey. He loved sharing that passion with his family and friends. He was a member of American Legion Pierce-Lawton Post 37 and BPOE Elks #1619. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: Calling hours will be held on Wednesday, April 3, from 5 to 7 p.m., at Fenton & Hennessey Funeral Home in Bellows Falls. A funeral Mass will take place on Thursday, April 4, at 11 a.m., at St. Charles Church in Bellows Falls. Burial will follow at St. Charles Cemetery. Donations to Visiting Nurses and Hospice of Dartmouth Health, 88 Prospect St., White River Junction, VT 05001.

• **Elizabeth Elaine "Betty" Ellison, 83**, of Hinsdale, New Hampshire. Died March 26, 2024, at Pine Heights nursing home in Brattleboro following a period of declining health. Betty was born in Brattleboro on March 28, 1940, the daughter of Howard and Catherine (Lindsey) Tudor. She grew up in the lower South Main Street area, attending Canal Street School, and graduated from Brattleboro Union High School, Class of 1958. She worked most of her career as a legal secretary for several Brattleboro area attorneys that included the late Edward John. Later, she worked in the Public Defenders' Office in Brattleboro, which she retired from following several years of faithful service. Betty enjoyed trips to the area casinos and loved playing Bingo every week with her beloved aunt, Marion Longueil. Betty was well known for her pleasant, easy-going personality and spirit of friendship. On Dec. 31, 1987 in Brattleboro, she married Richard E. Ellison, who predeceased her on March 5, 2016. Survivors include nine first cousins: Shirley King, Janice Bristol, Linda LeClair, Peggy Scott, Robert Lindsey, James Lindsey, Debbie Langlois, John Lindsey, and Carolyn Ross. Additionally, she leaves a host of friends that include Mike Gillis and Christine Dunleavy. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: In keeping with her final wishes, there are no formal funeral services scheduled. Betty will be buried next to her beloved husband in East Clarendon (Vt.) Cemetery. Donations to the Windham County Humane Society, P.O. Box 397, Brattleboro, VT 05302. To offer condolences, visit atamaniuk.com.

• **Gertrude K. Potash, 107**, of Brattleboro. Died peacefully at home, in her sleep and surrounded by family, on March 15, 2024. At the time of her death, she was believed to be the oldest living person in Vermont.

• **Patrick K. "Pat" Kelly, 61**, of Bellows Falls. Died at home, surrounded by his family, on March 23, 2024, after a short illness. Pat was born on April 28, 1962, in Bellows Falls to the late Maurice and Loretta (Brooks) Kelly. He attended schools in Bellows Falls, graduating from Bellows Falls Union High School in 1980. Pat worked as a plumber in the Bellows Falls area for almost 40 years. In July 1996, he married Bridget (Stevens) who survives. His much-loved children, Hannah and Ryan, were his pride and joy. He is also survived by his sister, Kathleen Kelly, nephews Connor (Jessica), and Hunter, his brother, Brian Kelly (Darlene), and nephew, Brendan, and nieces Molly and Meagan, as well as several other cousins whom he enjoyed spending time with along with his mother-in-law, Margaret. Pat always had a big hug and kiss for everyone. He treasured his friendships and his Friday afternoon "marketing" time with them. He enjoyed family vacations, especially their trip to Ireland, sharing with Hannah and Ryan their Irish heritage. Pat was a long-time fan of Notre Dame Fighting Irish football and Boston Bruins hockey. He loved sharing that passion with his family and friends. He was a member of American Legion Pierce-Lawton Post 37 and BPOE Elks #1619. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: Calling hours will be held on Wednesday, April 3, from 5 to 7 p.m., at Fenton & Hennessey Funeral Home in Bellows Falls. A funeral Mass will take place on Thursday, April 4, at 11 a.m., at St. Charles Church in Bellows Falls. Burial will follow at St. Charles Cemetery. Donations to Visiting Nurses and Hospice of Dartmouth Health, 88 Prospect St., White River Junction, VT 05001.

Services

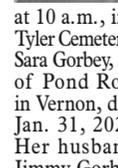


• Come share your stories to celebrate the life of **Jane Southworth** on Saturday, May 18, from 2 to 4:30 p.m., at

The Marina Restaurant on Putney Road in Brattleboro. A longtime, beloved, and hearty Brattleboro resident, Jane died Sept. 2, 2023 in Bridgeport, Connecticut, of complications from pneumonia.



• Graveside committal rites and burial for **Jimmy and Joanne Gorbey** will be conducted Friday, April 12, at 10 a.m., in the family lot in Tyler Cemetery in Vernon. Joanne Sara Gorbey, 79, of Pond Road in Vernon, died Jan. 31, 2024. Her husband, Jimmy Gorbey, 81, also of Pond Road, died Feb. 2, 2024. To view their full obituaries and offer condolences to the families, visit atamaniuk.com.



• A service of remembrance for **James Kiehle** will be held April 27, at 1 p.m., at All Souls Church at the West Village Meetinghouse, located at 29 South St., West Brattleboro. Mr. Kiehle, 80, a longtime social studies teacher at Brattleboro Union High School, died on Nov. 6, 2023.

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.

Project Feed the Thousands awarded \$5,000 for food shelves

BRATTLEBORO—Liberty Mutual and Safeco Insurance have awarded The Richards Group a 2024 Make More Happen Award for its volunteerism with Project Feed the Thousands, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing food and personal care items for thousands of people in and around seven communities across southeastern Vermont and southwestern New Hampshire. The award includes an initial donation of \$5,000 for Project Feed the Thousands, which can be doubled to \$10,000 just by having community supporters vote online. As of Monday, April 1, The Richards Group and Project Feed the Thousands community story is highlighted on the official agent is highlighted on the official agentgiving.com/the-richards-group-2024, where supporters can vote. When the cause receives 500 votes, the \$5,000 donation will be doubled.

Last year, Project Feed the Thousands collected 431,856 meals and personal care items for thousands of people in need. The organization also raised \$214,747 to help buy even more food for neighbors who would otherwise go hungry. The \$10,000 donation would directly support nine food shelves in the greater Brattleboro area and allow them to bulk purchase food in more expensive categories such as canned meats and proteins that families need. "We are honored and incredibly grateful for being awarded the 2024 Make More Happen Award so we can continue to help our community and give back even more to Project Feed the Thousands," Tracey John, Retirement Plan Consultant at The Richards Group, said in a news release. "Project Feed the Thousands has had a significant impact in the Brattleboro area, and we are thrilled to double

the donation with community support." The Richards Group has supported Project Feed the Thousands since it launched 30 years ago. It started when John, also a board member of Project Feed the Thousands, reached out to the rest of the staff for support. Without hesitation, the agency donated and offered additional support. They also learned that a staff member had grandchildren who were directly impacted by the nonprofit, as the children had also been recipients of food donations. To this day, The Richards Group continues to host pot luck lunches in exchange for donations and keeps a big red bucket — the symbol of Project Feed — to collect nonperishable food from staff and customers to donate to local food pantries throughout the giving season.

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- thy depressed neighbor
- thy asian neighbor
- thy lgbtqia neighbor
- thy disabled neighbor
- thy indigenous neighbor
- thy conservative neighbor
- thy elderly neighbor
- thy homeless neighbor
- thy latino neighbor
- thy addicted neighbor
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- thy incarcerated neighbor
- thy _____ neighbor



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CCC anniversary

FROM SECTION FRONT

Emergency Conservation Work program under the Emergency Conservation Work Act of 1933. The U.S. Army organized and supervised the camps.

Roosevelt made clear that the government wasn't going to employ people in competitive businesses, but he would put them to work on projects that improved and restored natural resources for everyone.

Deforestation, unchecked soil erosion and poor farming practices had created a massive environmental disaster across the nation. During the infamous "Dust Bowl" in the Southern Plains, states lost tons of topsoil per acre due to unsustainable agricultural practices. Millions of acres of farmland could no longer grow crops or sustain cattle. Farm families were financially devastated, which contributed to the Great Depression and resulted in the largest mass migration in the nation's history.

As governor of New York State, before running for president in 1932, Roosevelt had successfully tried similar programs on a state level. In his first 100 days as president, he called an emergency session of Congress and implemented programs like the CCC that put people to work.

And Roosevelt made sure it happened immediately. Rather than taking years to see results, within days of signing the bill that brought the CCC into existence on April 5, the first members of the Corps were registered, and camps were set up and operating within the first two weeks. Within three months, Roosevelt had put more than 300,000 young men to work in 1,433 camps across the country. All told, more than five million men would find work through the CCC.

In Vermont, the CCC built roads, trails and shelters. In Windham County, it created Dutton Pines State Park on Route 5 in East Dummerston, Grafton State Park, and infrastructure in the Green Mountain National Forest and dozens of other places.

Southern Vermont had CCC camps in Cavendish, Ludlow, Peru, Plymouth, Wilmington, Townshend, Weston, Windsor, and Westminster. The one in Westminster, Camp Wilgus, is most often referred to as being in Bellows Falls or Rockingham. In fact, it was just outside of Bellows Falls in North Westminster, locally referred to as Gageville.

Eventually there were up to 500,000 men in 2,900 camps nationwide. Vermont is usually said to have had around 30 camps, but the Vermont Historical Society lists 42, some of which were likely just temporary tent camps. The camps initially housed around 200 men each in military tents, but ranged in size from 100 to

300 people. In a time before there was unemployment compensation or any kind of social security program, tens of thousands of young, unmarried men aged 17 to 28 were put to work, and in southern Vermont, much of what they accomplished is still being used today.

A job, and a whole lot more

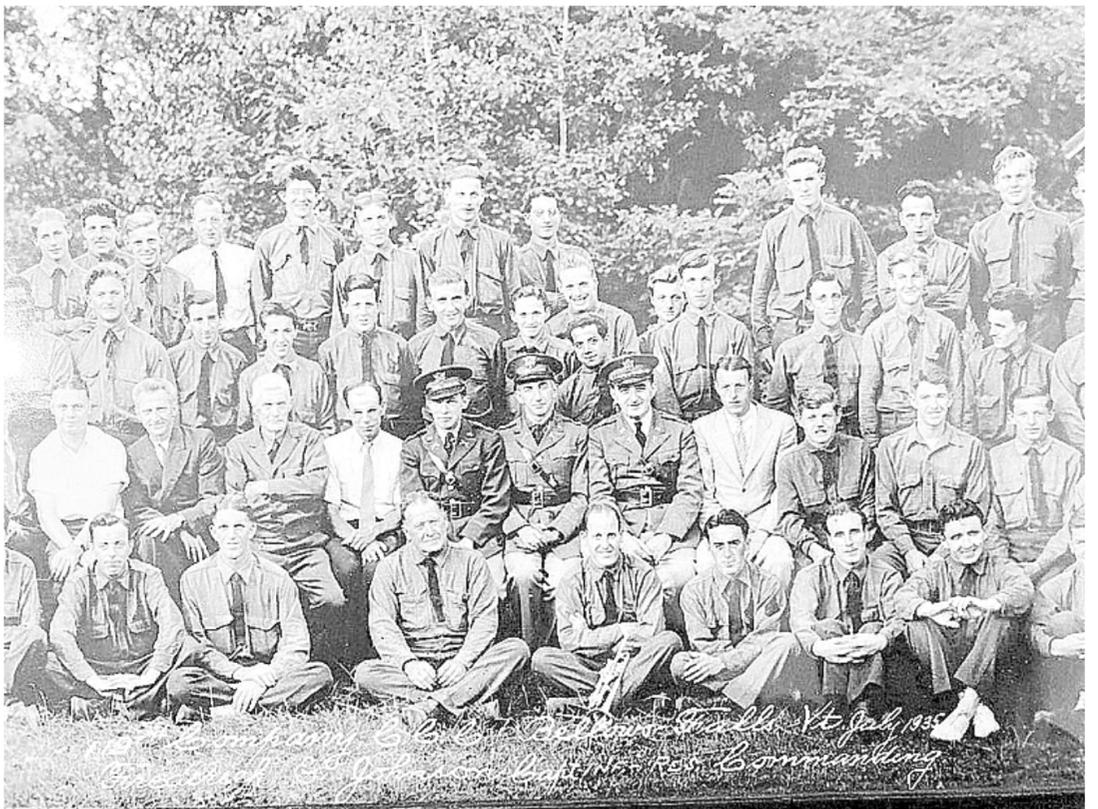
People applying for work with the CCC were mostly unmarried young men with no other employment. They worked five days, 40 hours a week, and had to sign up for a minimum of six months. They were paid \$30 a month and provided with food, housing, clothes and medical care. That pay is equivalent to about \$600 a month today. Those hired into specialized or leadership positions could make from \$36 to \$45 a month, or \$717 to \$896 in today's dollars.

The government also automatically sent \$25 from workers' checks each month to their families, which was a huge factor in boosting the economy out of the Depression. Grim evidence of the state of the nation was that 70% of the young men accepted into the CCC were malnourished. For many of them, their time in the CCC would be the first time in their lives that they were fed three meals a day.

In addition to the pay the men and their families received, the camps also boosted the economy by buying food, clothing, building materials and other supplies. The CCC camps also hired what were referred to as LEMs — locally experienced men — who would train and supervise the CCC men in carpentry, roofing, forestry, mechanics and other skills. This provided much-needed income to the rural regions around the camps.

Each camp also had teachers, an infirmary, and a doctor on site, providing medical care on a level unimaginable in most of the country. Eventually the CCC camps would house four groups, usually racially segregated. There were separate camps for young, single unemployed white and black men, camps for Native people on reservations, and eventually camps were established to employ older veterans of the Spanish American War and World War I.

Most of the men had only an eighth grade education or less. Many were illiterate. One of the little-known aspects of the camps was that on weekends and evenings, classes, intramural sports and other programs were part of the daily schedule. Thousands were taught to read, and many were able to get a high school diploma, and even take college



A small section of a large photo of the more than 200 CCC men that were at Camp Wilgus in July 1935.

courses.

The camp in Westminster had ball fields and an outdoor boxing ring. Others had libraries with books donated by area residents. There were classes daily in dozens of skills and crafts, including blacksmithing, leather work, music, engineering, aviation, transportation, mechanics, electrical work and many others.

The camps often published their own newsletters. At Camp Wilgus, it was called *The Bellower*. The first group of 185 CCC workers arrived from Massachusetts in 1933, and they lived in tents while constructing a more permanent camp. In its eight-year history, Camp Wilgus would eventually comprise around 20 buildings, including four large barracks, an infirmary, showers, garages and a recreation room.

Not all the local residents were pleased with having a camp of 200 young men nearby. While many CCC camps were built in rural locations, Camp Wilgus in Westminster was barely a mile from the village of Bellows Falls.

Lovell's *History of the Town of Rockingham* noted that "some decided that the camp was too near Bellows Falls for the good of its young people, a result of some unpleasant experiences."

Sentiment was so strong against the camp that it was decided in January 1936 to move it north to Waterbury that spring. But that never happened, which would turn out to be a blessing.

Serious flooding in March 1936 and the Great New England Hurricane in September 1938 kept the Camp Wilgus workers busy with erosion control, forest cleanup, and clearing and opening up the roads in the Connecticut River Valley during both natural disasters.

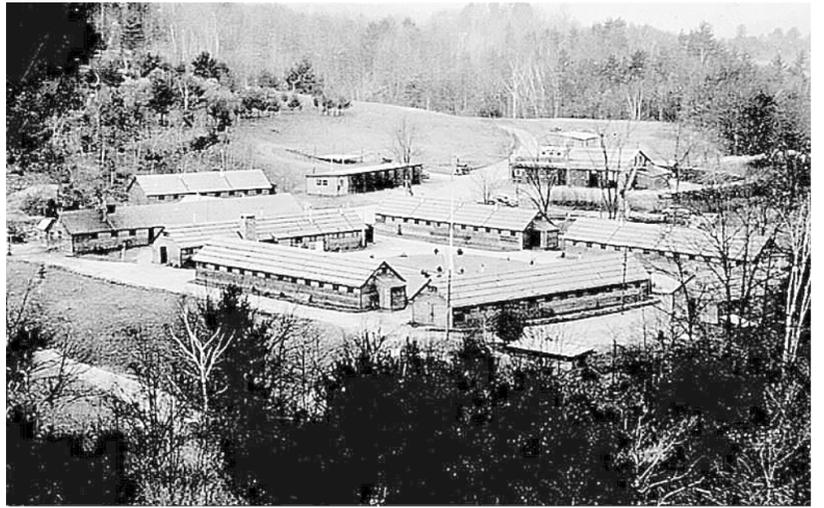
In the two years after the 1938 hurricane, the Camp Wilgus men cleared 985 acres of blown down timber, opened up 80 miles of road and, during the winters, cleaned up and burned around 10,000 piles of brush and debris.

One of the main projects for Camp Wilgus workers was pest control — in particular, fighting white pine blister and infestations of tent caterpillars like the spongy moth.

In particular, their efforts were focused on the forests around Minard's Pond, the water supply for the village of Bellows Falls. The fact that periodic spongy moth infestations continue to be a serious problem in the area shows that, despite the efforts, the pest was far from eradicated.

In addition to its work creating state parks, public picnic areas, trails, roads, dams, power lines and other infrastructure in Vermont, the CCC also was instrumental in developing the state's ski industry.

Perry Merrill, the Vermont State Forester from 1930 to 1966, helped establish Vermont's public



Camp Wilgus, located in North Westminster, had four barracks and seven other buildings, including an infirmary and blacksmith shop.

land policy. Travel in Europe had exposed him to the sport of skiing, and he thought it would be perfect to introduce it to Vermont. Merrill had Vermont's CCC camps put to work building the first trails on what would become the ski resorts of Stowe, Bromley, Burke Mountain and Okemo.

Reforestation was such an important part of the CCC's work that it was nicknamed "Roosevelt's Tree Army." In less than 10 years, the CCC planted a staggering 3.5 billion trees. Since the 1970s, many Vermont state parks have built lean-tos and cabins using timber harvested onsite from trees the CCC planted in the 1930s.

With World War II approaching, the need for CCC camps waned. Camp Wilgus closed in April 1941. In 1942, the town gave the Forestry Service permission to use the buildings for the Army Corps of Engineers and Military Police, which they did until 1943. When the Army left, the town took over the buildings.

Over the years the area had various owners and for a time was used as picnic grounds. Some buildings were used for woodworking and wooden bowl making, but were eventually abandoned.

When Interstate 91 was constructed in the 1960s, it cut through parts of the camp. Over time, the wooden structures collapsed. All that remains today are the two stone piers at the entry to CCC Road, several stone foundations, and the fieldstone fireplace that was once part of the camp's recreation building.

The CCC and the legacy of the New Deal

The programs of Roosevelt's New Deal are credited with

stabilizing wages and prices, giving the nation a sense of hope, and salvaging the U.S. economy. In a bit of an odd twist, it has been said that the federal social programs of the 1930s ended up saving capitalism.

Other programs that came out of the New Deal include the National Labor Relations Act, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and, in 1935, the Social Security Act, which also introduced the system of unemployment insurance.

Some of the programs, such as the CCC and the WPA, were intended to be temporary and were discontinued when no longer needed. Others, like Social Security and unemployment insurance, are still with us nearly a century later and remain overwhelmingly popular among working class citizens regardless of

political party. More than half of retired citizens say that Social Security is the major source of their income, and it remains one of the most popular and effective social programs in the history of the nation.

An unintended consequence of the CCC was that many of the young men in the program would end up in the military as soldiers during World War II, which gave America's war effort a tremendous boost.

Though the term *socialism* is a hot-button word in today's politically polarized culture, Roosevelt's social activism in the 1930s is credited with bringing back the nation's economy. It put millions of people to work, and accomplished hundreds of construction and natural conservation projects that are still enjoyed today.



One of the last vestiges of Camp Wilgus is this fieldstone pier near the entrance of CCC Road in North Westminster.



The manager's quarters at Townshend State Park is just one of structures still in use today that were built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

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SIT turns 60 FROM SECTION FRONT

and changed. Prior to the establishment of SIT, Donald Watt founded the Experiment in International Living (experiment.org) in 1932 “as a way to improve cross-cultural understanding,” according to the organization’s website. Shriver was an alumnus of the Experiment and modeled the cultural orientation of the Peace Corps program on its methods.

The Experiment invited American teenagers to attend summer camp with Swiss, German, Belgian, and French youth, and offered family-based home stays in those countries. By 1954, the program had expanded to countries around the world.

Those who lived in Brattleboro from the 1950s through the early 1980s will well remember greeting throngs of foreign students disembarking from the Experiment’s bus and working on their English skills as they shopped downtown. Students and teachers from all over the world descended on SIT’s campus, especially in the summertime.

Over the following 20 years, the nonprofit began to add undergraduate degrees and international development opportunities, and in 1992, with a global reach, the Experiment was rebranded as World Learning. The Experiment in International Living continued as summer high school programs.

A legacy of shaping new Vermonters

While visiting the campus, the Leahys will also meet privately with refugees who are a part of the New Vermonter Education Program.

Hosting refugees is nothing new for SIT. In 1956, the Experiment invited evacuees from Hungary to live in Vermont, staying with local families during the Hungarian Revolution.

In 1978, the organization was called upon once again to assist the State Department in creating language instruction, job

training and cultural orientation materials for refugees arriving from Southeast Asia after the Vietnam War.

More recently, in 2020, SIT and World Learning began hosting Afghan refugees on their Brattleboro campus.

Partnering with the Ethiopian Community Development Council, the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation, and the Tutorial Center in Bennington, the first wave of Afghans included 100 refugees.

Since then, World Learning and SIT faculty, staff, and local volunteers have provided English-language instruction, temporary housing, and cultural-orientation classes to over 300 refugees from Afghanistan, Ukraine and other countries.

“Refugee resettlement needs a whole-community approach,” says Carol Jenkins, CEO of World Learning. “As pillars within their communities, higher education institutions have incredible potential in this context, and World Learning’s program in Vermont serves as a powerful model for others to follow.”

Patrick Leahy is proud of Vermont’s welcoming culture, and appreciative of our state’s hospitality.

“As the first stop in Vermont for newcomers from Afghanistan, Ukraine, and elsewhere, World Learning and SIT bring together staff, faculty, alumni, and neighbors to offer language, cultural orientation, and friendship in a program that is a national model for effective refugee integration,” Leahy said in the news release.

He continued, “SIT students and faculty started making a difference for our world from the day this unique and game-changing institution was created here in southern Vermont in 1964, and they haven’t stopped for the past 60 years. Training Peace Corps volunteers, educating Nobel Peace Prize winners, changing lives and perspectives,



An aerial view of the School for International Training campus in Brattleboro.

COURTESY PHOTO

and leading the way with bold innovative programs.”

Leading in a time of change

Dr. Sophia Howlett, SIT’s president, is sitting in her Main Street apartment, facing a view of Wantastiquet mountain and the Connecticut River. She’s just returned from a home stay in Samoa, and notes that home stays with families are still a mainstay of SIT programming.

Now halfway through her second term as president, Howlett considers SIT “a well-kept secret to many, but if you know us, you really know us and appreciate what we do.”

“I meet alumni all the time,” she says. “In fact, when I was considering this job, I began to realize that about two-thirds of my friends had already been involved with the organization!”

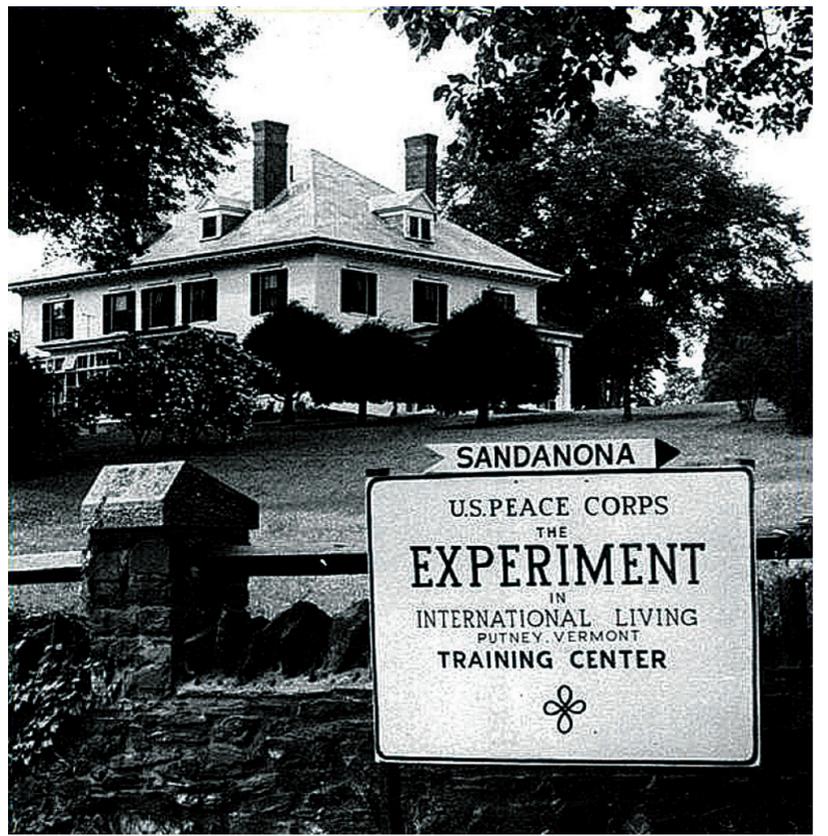
In 2018, SIT pruned approximately 30 positions as part of a major reorganization that moved its full-time graduate programs from Brattleboro to satellite campuses in more than 30 countries.

Howlett jokes that sometimes people will stop her in the grocery store and ask if SIT is now closed.

“Not at all,” she says, laughing. “In fact, we’re bigger and more impactful than we’ve ever been!”

Despite the recalibration, Brattleboro remains the home base for World Learning Inc.

“The entire campus is used for events, like our celebration this Friday. We also use our housing in the summer for residencies for students. Brattleboro is our headquarters, and all our alumni continue to feel that Brattleboro is our home,” she says proudly. “We’re like the outside of a



The School for International Training’s Sandanona Graduate Center, circa 1963, shortly after the institution pivoted and began training Peace Corps volunteers.

COURTESY PHOTO COMMONS FILE

beehive — everything might look more quiet than in previous years on our campus,” she says. “But, in fact, inside, we’re running our programs, in places all over the world from our base in Vermont.”

What’s changed from previous decades when foreign students

were seen downtown is that, like many educational institutions, SIT is now more global than ever.

“Vermont is still the mother ship, but now our students aren’t solely in classrooms on our campus,” Howlett says. “Instead, they are traveling all over the world to do their learning.”

As the world has changed, so have the programs available through SIT.

Students can now pursue a master’s program in climate change and sustainability, beginning their training in Iceland for the first semester.

The program moves to Zanzibar. There, “students explore the effects of climate change on tropical ecosystems; communities of the Indian Ocean; and best practices for balancing natural resources with sustainable growth.”

“Their last semester, students can choose to study anywhere in the world,” says Howlett. “We’re educating future leaders about climate change, and their learning will be an ongoing challenge.”

“There will be likely be forced migration as the effects of it shifts our ability to live in some parts of the world, potentially creating more refugees than we’ve ever seen before,” she says.

SIT Graduate Institute now offers numerous diverse, full-time graduate programs that include Sustainable Development Practice; Diplomacy and International Relations; and Intercultural Service, Leadership & Management.

They also offer a doctorate program in global education, the only program of its kind.

SIT’s 60th birthday event will reflect the programming it offers, with panel discussions such as “Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Rural Development” and “Internationalization at Home and Abroad: Vermont as a Window to the World.”

“Over six decades, we have achieved accreditation as a higher education institution, expanded into a graduate institute, and built an extraordinary study-abroad program, including the International Honors Program,” Howlett says.

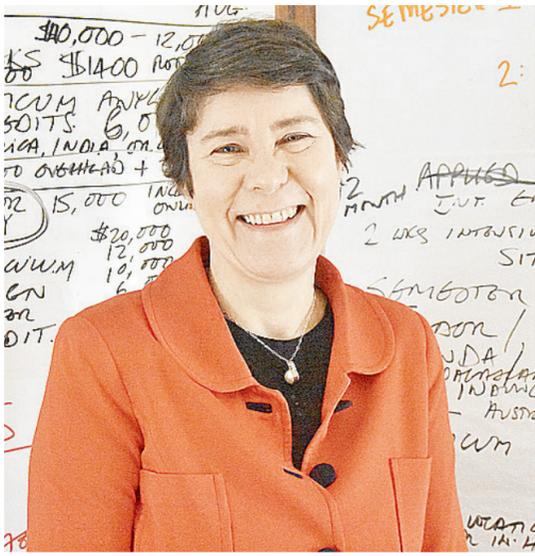
What’s next for SIT?

Howlett describes herself as a planner. “At World Learning and SIT, we’re all about impact,” she says. “We’re asking, what is the next phase within the context of the global community? What more can we be doing?”

Discussions about programing include more focus on sustainability, interchange with Indigenous communities, and how SIT/World Learning can make programing more inclusive and available to all.

“We want to help make even more people aware of who we are and what we do,” Howlett says, noting that she is “always open to hearing how World Learning and SIT can contribute to make Brattleboro a more vibrant community.”

“I live here, too,” she says. “I want to see an energetic downtown and community. Maybe there are more ways we can do that in the future.”



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT COMMONS FILE PHOTO

Dr. Sophia Howlett, president of the School for International Training.

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The ARTS

Wednesday, April 3, 2024

page B1

In Bellows Falls, a reimagined traditional favorite play shows the challenges posed by both change and staunch adherence to tradition



The Wild Goose Players rehearse a scene from their upcoming production of "Fiddler on the Roof" at the Bellows Falls Opera House.

a new take on an old chestnut

By Annie Landenberger
The Commons

BELLOWS FALLS—Wild Goose Players (WGP) presents the nine-time Tony Award-winning musical *Fiddler on the Roof* this weekend and next at the Bellows Falls Opera House, 7 Village Square.

With some of musical theater's most cherished tunes — *Sunrise, Sunset; If I Were a Rich Man; Matchmaker; To Life* — *Fiddler* is about family and community, love and relationships. It cuts across barriers to deliver lessons of tolerance — of acceptance — in the face of prejudice and discrimination. And it shows the challenges posed by both change and staunch adherence to tradition. When do we adhere to tradition? When is it time to let go?

Tevye, the titular fiddling milkman, says in the script: "Because of our traditions, we've kept our balance for many, many years. Here in Anatevka, we have traditions for

everything: how to sleep, how to eat... how to work... how to wear clothes." But soon he learns that just because "it's always been that way," that doesn't mean it's the best way.

Tevye's iconic character springs from a story called *Tevye and his Daughters* by the prolific and popular Yiddish writer Sholem Aleichem, whose early works told of Jewish life in Eastern Europe.

The brainchild of Broadway giants Jerome Robbins and Harold Prince, with music by Jerry Bock, lyrics by Sheldon Harnick, and book by Joseph Stein, *Fiddler* opened on Broadway in 1964. It had one of the most successful runs in Broadway history and has gone on to see several revivals, a 1971 film adaptation, and countless regional productions.

Fiddler is set around 1905 in the fictional Russian village of Anatevka, and centers on Tevye's adherence to tradition, his attempts to cope with the independent women in his family, and his struggles to maintain his Jewish faith and lifestyle in the face of shifting social

mores, the growing anti-Semitism of tsarist Russia, and an edict that ultimately evicts the Jews from their village.

Wild Goose Players' Dominic DiBenedetto directs this production while its founder and artistic director, David Stern, plays Tevye.

Stern notes that many of WGP's musicals in recent years — *Chicago, Urinetown, Cabaret* — have been heavy, dark, edgy. "We hadn't done a family-friendly, established piece — an 'old chestnut' — in a long time."

Though it may seem to ripple with significance given current events, "we are not making any statement," Stern asserts, "and we have no interest in doing so."

"We all have plenty of feelings about it," he says.

"For us, the show is a piece that shows a people being thrown out of their land, not an uncommon plight in world history," says Stern.

■ SEE 'FIDDLER', B2



The Wild Goose Players rehearse a scene from their upcoming production of "Fiddler on the Roof" at the Bellows Falls Opera House.

Getting to know a people and a culture Films by and about Palestinians will screen on Sundays this month

By Annie Landenberger
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—"I don't know what it's like to live in Palestine, but through these films, I think I have a better idea; I would hope that anyone watching [them] would have a similar experience."

So says Shana Frank of Putney, a math educator who has coordinated a four-part Palestine film series to be offered every Sunday this April at 4 p.m. at the Latchis Theatre, 50 Main St.

The series is presented by Southern Vermont for Palestine (SoVT4P),

described in a news release as "a group of local residents who came together in October to organize rallies, protests, and events focused on Palestinian rights and freedom from occupation."

Part of the statewide Vermont Coalition for Palestinian Liberation, SoVT4P is "a growing collaboration of 10 groups and hundreds of individuals working together for a free Palestine."

Coalition members include New Hampshire Jewish Voice for Peace; the Vermont Law and Graduate School chapter of the National Lawyers Guild; UVM Students for Justice in Palestine; and Vermonters for Justice in Palestine.

"There's no political agenda" behind the series, Frank stresses. "We just want to offer exposure to a body of people who might not be too well-known, and to maybe break down some of the stereotypes and biases we have from the media. Not knowing these people personally and being presented with images of who they are and what they represent can be misleading."

The hope, says Frank, is that "people feel more informed about who Palestinians are, what their history is, what their hopes and dreams are, what some of their values are in terms of

family and education."

Frank adds that a common theme across the series is "young people who are facing the challenges that most young people do growing up, with the added challenge of living in a country that's experienced a number of wars, even in their lifetime."

But these stories depict other casualties of this violence, too.

"Education has always been highly prized there," Frank says. "Students want to go on to college and get jobs that reflect their education, and we don't realize the limitations that the occupation and the siege have put on

young people."

She expects that viewers may well identify with what they witness, and perhaps think to themselves, "That could be my son or daughter's friend," "that could be my grandson," or "that could be my child."

"The people in the films talk about everyday life" and how the turmoil raises such obdurate barriers to their progress. As Frank points out, "They want the same things we do."

Activists say that media blur impressions of Palestinian people with Hamas or the Palestine Liberation

■ SEE PALESTINIAN FILMS, B3

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arts & community CALENDAR

THURSDAY CONT. THURSDAY CONT. FRIDAY CONT. SATURDAY CONT. SUNDAY CONT.

4

Well-being

CHESTER Memory Café: Memory Cafés are welcoming places for caregivers and their loved ones with dementia or other cognitive disorders to come and enjoy support, learn about resources, make connections. People in early stages of Alzheimer's are welcome. Senior Solutions sponsors these Memory Cafés. Their staff/volunteers will engage with your loved one while you meet with other caregivers. Come with your loved one who has dementia, Alzheimer's or Parkinson's.

- ▶ 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. on the first Thursday of every month.
- ▶ Free for everyone.
- ▶ St. Lukes Episcopal Church, 313 Main St. More information: <https://www.seniorsolutionsvt.org/services/caregiver-support/memory-cafes>

Contact person: Joann Erenhouse, erenhouse@seniorsolutionsvt.org.

Arts and crafts

GREENFIELD Ceramics for All!: Refresh skills if you haven't been in the studio for a while or begin your clay study. Start with handbuilding techniques and elaborate on those as class proceeds. We'll explore the potters wheel in some classes to offer experience of using that tool (and maybe refresh students with previous experience), but main instruction will be handbuilding. Open to students age 16+. Instructor is ceramic artist David Eichelberger

- ▶ 9:30 a.m. - 12 noon. Eight-week class on Thursdays (no class 5/9). If you ever felt intimidated to try out this endlessly versatile material, don't be!
- ▶ Through Thursday, May 30.
- ▶ \$375.00.
- ▶ 10 Forward Venue, 10 Fiske Avenue. Information: marlborestudioschool.org/spring-2024/p/adult-ceramics.

Ideas and education

GUILFORD Guilford Cares: Estate Planning Jonathan D. Secrest, Esq.: Jonathan D. Secrest, Esq. presents overview of estate planning including the most important things to think about/biggest mistakes to avoid. Topics include among others: Wills/trusts. Lessening burden on your heirs. Providing for minor children or those with special needs. Families with children from prior marriages. Protecting assets in a nursing home. Avoiding or reducing taxes. Bring questions and he will make the topics of trusts and wills clear, understandable and even interesting.

- ▶ 1 p.m. During his career, Jonathan's worked as attorney for the Federal Government, argued

before the VT Supreme Court, testified before VT Legislature on improvements to the state's probate laws which he helped to draft. He's drafted complex wills and trusts including special needs trusts, advised clients on business succession issues, counseled clients regarding elder law and Medicaid planning.

- ▶ Free.
- ▶ Guilford Free Library, 4024 Guilford Center Rd. Information: More information: Guilford Cares, 802-579-1350, guilfordcaresvt@gmail.com.

5

Music

BRATTLEBORO Live at The River Garden Marketplace: Jesse Brody offers Bossa Nova and Acoustic Blues Classics and Originals: Brody (aka Lepkoff), winner of the 2022 Vermont Blues Society Challenge, plays and sings bossa nova originals as well as classics by Jobim, Lyra, and others. The 2nd set will feature '20s and '30s-style originals and classics. Brody's songs have the sophistication of art song or the knee-slapping earthiness of '30s style blues. His lyrics can be romantic or humorous, witty, ironic depending on the song.

- ▶ 7 - 9 p.m.
- ▶ Free.
- ▶ The River Garden, 157 Main St. Information: 802-246-0982.

GUILFORD Culomba: Boston-based Vocal Quintet: Culomba specializes in close harmony singing from different global styles, including American folk traditions, music from Georgia, Corsica, and the Balkans, renaissance polyphony, and originals. Many of you may have heard some of these singers in a recent Palader Strings performance at the Brattleboro Music Center with visiting musician, Frey Clue, the Swedish Nyckelharpa virtuoso.

- ▶ 7 p.m. Singers traveled internationally to study w/ masters of traditional music/performed at venues such as Club Passim (Cambridge), Jalopy (Brooklyn), Caffe Lena (Saratoga), the inaugural Songroots Polyphony Festival (Vancouver). Current members include Sophie Michaux, Adam Simon, Lysander Jaffe, Lexi Ugelow, Daniel Fridley.
- ▶ \$20 is suggested donation per person. All proceeds at door go directly to the musicians following the concert.
- ▶ Wendy Redlinger, 2596 Tater Ln. Information: 802-254-6189; wendy@asteriamusica.com.

BRATTLEBORO The Woodpeckers play hot and sweet Swing Jazz from the 1920s: Music is danceable, infectious, joyous, highly improvisatory,

good-humored, vaudevillian, raucous, boisterous, irreverent, celebratory. Music that makes you smile and is a continuation of the First Fridays With the Woodpeckers series. Walter Slowinski, clarinet; Ron Kelley, tenor sax; Ty Gibbons, standup bass, Mark Anagnostopoulos, rhythm guitar.

- ▶ 7:30 - 10 p.m. The Pub has a welcoming, congenial, community vibe. Come hang out with your friends. No cover.
- ▶ Latchis Pub & Latchis Underground, 6 Flat St. Information: 802-380-1369.

BRATTLEBORO Rasa String Quartet Presents Impressions: East Meets West

Concert includes joyful celebration of the Lunar New Year in Chen Yi's "Shuo" and Jungyoon Wie's version of "A Popular Tune." Also featured: Exciting fusion of East Asian folk music and Western classical tradition showcasing visionary composers who embrace traditional folk music from around Asia, capturing essence of each style through their own unique cultural lens. Performers: Maura Shawn Scanlin and Kiyoshi Hayashi, violin; Emma Powell, viola; Mina Kim, cello.

- ▶ 7 p.m.
- ▶ \$20 In advance, \$25 at the door.
- ▶ Brattleboro Music Center, 72 Blanche Mayse Way. Information: 802-257-4523; bmcvt.org.

Arts and crafts

BRATTLEBORO "Places in Watercolor!": Painting with watercolor is direct and fresh making it an engaging and challenging medium. Learn to see light, shadow and color temperature. Work from landscape photos depicting places holding personal meaning. Techniques highlighting softness of shapes, play of light/shadow, depth of perspective will be introduced. Explore possibilities and limitations of painting with watercolor and develop a sense of necessary sequential steps/techniques to help structure your approach.

- ▶ 10 a.m. - 12 noon.
- ▶ \$175.
- ▶ River Gallery School, 32 Main St., #201. Information: Website: tinyurl.com/yjzadnzm.

6

Music

PUTNEY Rob Flax's Boom Chick Trio: Rob Flax possesses a rare combination: Award-winning virtuoso violinist, classically trained but known for his jazz, improvisational pyrotechnics, grooves. He's also

a powerhouse vocalist, capable of silky crooning a la Nat King Cole or visceral Chicago blues shouts. For many years Rob performed mostly solo but he's found a band that can keep up: Boom Chick Trio features Slava Tolstoy on guitar and Max Ridley on bass - instrumentalists balance their prowess in service of the song.

- ▶ 7:30 p.m.
- ▶ \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door, \$10 livestream.
- ▶ Next Stage Arts Project, 15 Kimball Hill. Advance ticketing closes two hours before showtime. Tickets: tinyurl.com/254raTrf.

The written word

Brattleboro Poetry Discussion Group (via Zoom): This month: Maxine Kumin. No experience necessary; copies of poems provided. Led by Barbara Morrison.

- ▶ 12 noon - 2 p.m.
- ▶ Free.
- ▶ Zoom. Information: Register: info@timetowrite.us.

Community building

BRATTLEBORO TeamWork Opportunity: Make Flowers to Decorate the BFC Café: Brattleboro Food Co-op shareholders of all ages are invited to gather together make paper flowers in the style of stained glass windows for display in the café. We'll provide basic instructions, however, creativity is welcome. Fun snacks provided and all participants will earn Shareholder Hours for participating.

- ▶ 10 a.m. - 12 noon.
- ▶ Free.
- ▶ Brattleboro Food Co-op Cooking Classroom, 7 Canal St. Information: 802-246-2821; shareholders@brattleborofoodcoop.coop.

Visual arts and shows

BRATTLEBORO Paintings of Julia Zanes and Reception: "This selection comes from bodies of work made since 2020. The small ones "Household Objects," were an offshoot of a large body of work I made: "The Good Eye." Interested in apotropaic art, I tried to shift from image to object. I like thinking of paintings as magical objects with a specific, household purpose: keeping evil at bay, striking me as a funny, medieval way to look at things. I've always liked Grimm's Fairy Tales."

- ▶ 4/6: 1-3 p.m. Reception. "Although I use gold in paintings (often a component of fairy tales) I don't think of them as precious but rather ordinary objects we keep around at home for purpose beyond decoration. I don't believe in magical powers of paintings, but on some level know it to be true. The works on paper and medium-sized abstract paintings are my most recent. Each a fraction of a larger body of work."
- ▶ Through Monday, May 27.
- ▶ Free.
- ▶ CX Silver Gallery, 814 Western Ave. Information: 802-257-7898; cxsilvergallery.com.

Ideas and education

BELLOWS FALLS Exploring the Habitability of Jupiter's Moon Europa at Rockingham Library: Take this unique opportunity to learn from the expert about why Europa may be one of the best places to look for environments where life could exist beyond Earth. Even though Europa is but one of Jupiter's 90+ moons, it has been singled out for its special characteristics. Find out what these characteristics are and when, in the near future, the Europa Clipper will be sent up to conduct a detailed reconnaissance.

- ▶ 1 p.m. This program, of interest to curious people aged 14 through adult, is open to the public and accessible to those with disabilities.
- ▶ Free.
- ▶ Rockingham Free Public Library, 65 Westminster St. Information: 802-463-4270; rockinghamlibrary.org.

7

Kids and families

BRATTLEBORO International Beaver Day: Make your own Beaver Patch - A Family Maker's Workshop: Create a custom beaver patch, while celebrating and learning about beavers. An RGS teaching artist will have drawing and painting materials; fabric, thread, needles and felting supplies available. Work from images or your imagination of beavers to make your very own beaver patch to take home and display.

- ▶ 12 noon-3 p.m. This event helps support BEEC, River Gallery School, and the beavers!
- ▶ \$25, \$40 for a family (up to 5 people).
- ▶ River Gallery School, 32 Main St., #201. Information: Register: rivergalleryschool.asapconnected.com/#courseID=297289.

Community building

BRATTLEBORO Palestine Film Series: The Nakba & Its Legacy: Two documentaries and an animated feature film explore roots of current crisis. "Framed: The Politics of Stereotypes" challenges false media narratives about Middle Easterners. "The Nakba: How Palestinians were expelled from their homes" traces early history of Israel and forced displacement of 100,000s of Palestinians. "The Tower" tells a story through the eyes of a young girl and her grandfather of multiple generations of refugee families who long to return home.

- ▶ 4 - 6 p.m.
- ▶ By donation.

Ideas and education

PUTNEY NXT Curator Series: Art Deco: Commercializing the Avant-Garde: Join Angelina Lippert, the Chief Curator of Poster House (the country's first museum dedicated to the art and history of posters) for a discussing about the fascinating history of Art Deco advertising. From the Paris Exhibition of 1925 up through the 1939 New York World's Fair, this talk covers everything from the Great Depression up through the Great Gatsby. Discover the true meaning behind the definition of Deco and how it became the first global art movement.

- ▶ 7 p.m. The NXT Curator Series is sponsored in part by the Putney Public Library.
- ▶ Free. Donations appreciated.
- ▶ Next Stage Arts Project, 15 Kimball Hill. Information: 802-387-0102; nextstagearts.org.

9

Well-being

BRATTLEBORO Brattleboro Walk-In Clinic: Primary medical treatment for patients ages 18 to 64 in our community who do not have health insurance or who cannot afford their high deductibles or co-insurance.

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

To submit your event: calendar@commonsnews.org

Deadline: 5 p.m. Friday



Moby Pearson

Brattleboro Music Center offers series of Spring Music Salons

BRATTLEBORO—The Brattleboro Music Center offers a spring lineup of Music Appreciation Salons.

Moby Pearson — violinist, ensemble coach, and orchestra conductor — invites music lovers to enjoy an array of musical treats and opportunities to pick up new perspectives along the way.

As Pearson notes, "Salons are presented in a way that is accessible to all. You don't have to be a musician to attend — open ears are all that is required."

All offerings will be held Thursdays at 6:30 p.m. at the BMC. Topics are:

- April 11: "Strings!" A vital component of the orchestra, "the string family on its own has a fantastically rich repertoire," says Pearson. From Handel to Holst, Mendelssohn to Mahler, he will sample "some truly lush and marvelous compositions."
- April 25: "Robert Schumann." Schumann was a

former law student from Leipzig. In the age of Mendelssohn, Chopin, and Berlioz, Schumann's style stood out "for its yearning and pure passion. For him, composing was a world of fantasy and dreams. To that end, and in a tragically shortened life, he produced a remarkable number of works in all musical genres."

- May 9: "Pops! Salon." This will be a special evening of "favorites from across the centuries and the world." A catered dinner will be offered with all receipts going to Groundworks Collaborative. Participants will hear select recordings of short works from 16 composers ranging from Handel to Shostakovich to Dnicu (who?!).

The suggested donation is \$25 per session. Details on the salons will be posted at bmcvt.org and reservations are required. To receive information as it becomes available, email info@bmcvt.org or call 802-257-4523.

'Fiddler'

"Ironically," he adds, "it's a Jewish people being thrown off their land. It shows persecution of Jews in a way that could resonate with persecution of other people: there are a lot of ways to look at the show and what it asks us to think about."

And so, Stern continues, "our job is to do a gorgeous job revealing the story in such a way that people think about issues. It asks: How long do you want to fight? That's a question that's implicit in the show."

"It's a good show for us: there are a lot of reasons why it fits the company — a lot of strong roles for women. We always have a pretty strong LGBTQ+ presence in our community" and, in this production, such community members play several leads, he says.

"The whole piece is about changing and challenging tradition through the lens of loving relationships — loving relationships being the thing that leverages cultural change," Stern continues. "And here we are, in different loving relationships, leveraging cultural change."

Stern constructed the *Fiddler* set with a crew of carpenters, having designed it himself with a nod to the late, award-winning scenic designer Boris Aronson, who was born in Kyiv, Ukraine.

Stern also acknowledges the work of Russian-French-Jewish artist Marc Chagall, whose 1913 painting *The Fiddler* appears on the poster for the show, and evokes his homeland in Vitebsk, Belarus. "The Chabad Hasidim of Chagall's childhood," according to MarcChagall.net, "believed it possible to achieve communion with God through music and dance, and the fiddler was a vital presence in ceremonies and festivals."

Of his design, which is rich in

color, texture, symbol, and allusion, Stern adds: "I'm not a big proscenium guy," meaning he likes to break through boundaries of traditional scene design.

Thus, he's extended the apron of the Opera House stage with the blessing of management.

"They are very kind to us," he says. "They still do movies here," he explains, and so as long as the screen can be lowered, Stern has free rein.

Stern has worked paths and circles and many entrances from unexpected places into his design, "so there's an outer circle and an inner and a lot of ways to get in and out: I wanted to surprise people and keep it alive and not have too many set changes to slow us down." And he wanted to use Teyve's cart to its fullest potential, not only as a milk-delivery vehicle but as a symbol of the play's essential themes.

WGP is an itinerant company that has performed in a variety of venues, from Main Street Arts in Saxtons River to Next Stage Arts in Putney. Recently, the actors have gotten a certificate of occupancy for a small, black box-style, 40-seat rehearsal and performance space on the Square in Bellows Falls.

The company has acted as an incubator for playwrights for the past few years, and year-long monthly open readings have produced a new play each year.

This year's is *Year One* by Erik Gernand, to be directed by the playwright. The next big musical will be George Furth's *Merrily We Roll Along*, which will close its smash revival on Broadway in July.

Reflecting on the productive path WGP has trod, Stern says, "I manage now to make a living doing what I love to do. This is my job."

At 63, though, he has an eye toward succession planning, and slowly fading from leadership. "I don't need to [do it all]: marketing, recycling, storage, garbage, publicity, fundraising, grant writing" — on top of directing, designing, and envisioning, he says.

And so it fits that DiBenedetto is directing this production, though that wasn't part of a master plan.

"A few years ago, David talked about others taking on directing, and I was one," DiBenedetto says, adding, "It was always a plan."

He has been in theater for 25 years, and actively involved in directing youth theater for the past 10. "So I have experience and was interested, and we figured we'll wait for the right show."

But not long into the *Fiddler* production process, the man who was cast as Teyve had to leave the show; Stern stepped into the lead, which left the director role open.

"We'd said we'd start with my directing something small," which *Fiddler* hardly is — it has an acting ensemble of 60 and a full company of over 100, including backstage, front-of-house, designers, and set builders.

Still, he says, "This was the opportunity and I took it. It's been exciting and it felt right. It's always a joy to work with Wild Goose — it's a great place to be. That speaks a lot to the direction [of] the company and to everyone who's part of the production. It's synergy. It's been joyful."

DiBenedetto has enjoyed the change of pace from youth theater, and is grateful to have so many other people involved.

"I'm so used to productions

FROM SECTION FRONT

where I work with one or two others to get everything done. But there are so many here happy to help in so many different ways. I've learned a lot about managing input and staying 100 feet above the whole production to see it runs smoothly."

In leading roles, in addition to Stern, are: Ira Richardson, Arabella Garrison, Kristina Meima, Dennis Scott, Shayna Bredbeck, David Naughton, Morganna Ekkenes, Casey Volikas, Natalia Chiume, Mark Tullgren, Deven Wicker, Ron Bos-Lun, Gavy Kessler, Eben Watson, Ira Wilner, Tim Jones, Ezra Leonard, Libby McCawley, Mary Margaret Jones, Lea Kablik, Marilyn Tullgren, and Nate Bennet.

Lighting was designed by Jerry Stockman; costumes by Sandy Klein. Ashley Hensel-Browning choreographed and Carol Cronic directs a 10-member pit band.

Stern adds: "I love it. To me it's amazing that that many people want to give up this much time and make something."

While a few key roles — music director, choreographer, lighting designer, and pit band members — receive stipends of amounts that vary from acceptable to barely covering gas, the performers and all supporting company members, from backstage to front-of-house, are volunteers.

In addition, Stern says, Wild Goose has benefited from a number of grants.

Fiddler on the Roof runs Fridays through Sundays, April 5 to 7 and 11 to 13 at the Bellows Falls Opera House, with tiered ticket prices from \$10 to \$40. Visit wildgooseplayers.com for more information.

New England Youth Theatre presents 'Twelve Angry Jurors'

BRATTLEBORO—New England Youth Theatre (NEYT) presents *Twelve Angry Jurors*, by Reginald Rose, adapted by Sherman L. Sergel, Friday through Sunday, April 5–7 at NEYT, 100 Flat Street.

This play is directed by Eric Bass, assistant directed by James Gelter, choreographed by Shoshana Bass, scored by composer Julian Gerstin, and features members of the NEYT's senior company.

Twelve Angry Jurors (originally written as *Twelve Angry Men*) is a play about saving a democratic process, not necessarily about saving an innocent man. "We cannot know whether the accused in this play is actually guilty," say organizers in a news release, "we can only join the deliberations of the jury to determine whether there is enough evidence to convict the accused." *Twelve Angry Jurors* is a play of

arguments," says Eric Bass. "It demands our attention. It is a play of brief and shifting alliances and strange bedfellows. For the actors, it requires their full attention. And this is indeed challenging. Every word matters. That is how it is when something quite big is at stake — a person's life, or Democracy itself. Is this play exciting? Indisputably. And deeply human, warts and all."

Twelve Angry Jurors plays four performances: Friday, April 5, at 7 p.m.; Saturday, April 6, at 2 and 7 p.m.; and Sunday, April 7, at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$11 for students, \$13 for seniors, and \$15 for adults, with a 65 cent fee per ticket. Tickets available at NEYT.org and at the door.

Rob Flax's Boom Chick Trio coming to Next Stage

PUTNEY—Next Stage Arts presents the jazz combo Boom Chick Trio on Saturday, April 6, at 7:30 p.m.

Described as "equal parts hot swing, snarky songwriting, and lyrical storytelling," this trio of violin, guitar, and bass plus three-part harmony vocals "will transport you to a speakeasy somewhere in the back of a bar."

"Boom Chick! What a name to express the hot jazz trio that are masters of their craft," Keith Marks, executive director of Next Stage Arts, said in a news release. "We're excited to introduce these musicians to our community because they cross some interesting lines between traditional sounds while making it feel exciting and new."

Rob Flax is an award-winning violinist, classically trained but known for his jazz and improvisational playing;

he is also a vocalist "capable of silky crooning a la Nat King Cole or visceral Chicago blues shout."

For many years, Flax performed mostly solo, but after much searching, he says he's finally found a band that can keep up, with Slava Tolstoy on guitar and Max Ridley on bass. "Together, the three string-wielding maestros have forged a powerful group dynamic, developed over years of gigging and concerts," organizers said, "and the result is an interplay that will bring a smile to your face."

Next Stage is at 15 Kimball Hill in downtown Putney. Tickets are \$20 advance, \$25 at the door, and \$10 for the livestream. Advance tickets are available at nextstagearts.org. Next Stage will provide a beer, wine, and cocktail cash bar. For information, call 802-387-0102.

Epsilon Spire celebrates solar eclipse

BRATTLEBORO—Epsilon Spire, 190 Main St., hosts a solar eclipse celebration with Thistle on Monday, April 8. All ages are welcome and eclipse-viewing glasses will be provided.

Arrive at the front entrance of Epsilon Spire at 2 p.m. to receive your Solar Eclipse Glasses. Partake in some celestial-inspired refreshments, and then wander around downtown Brattleboro to enjoy viewing the partial Eclipse which begins at 2:14 p.m., peaks at 3:38 p.m., and ends at 4:37 p.m. Then return to Epsilon Spire at 5:30 p.m. for

the concert. According to organizers, Thistle is "an enchanting chamber folk trio performing on harp, cello, and voice," described as "angelic and ethereal, with music that draws influence from jazz, western classical and South Indian classical." Lyrics are inspired by fairy tales, poetry, and literature. "Evoking mystery, and wonder," organizers say, this music is meant to be heard by candlelight anywhere there is beauty — in a garden, historic church, or cemetery, serving as an access point to the spiritual world which can

be experienced through different states of mind."

Thistle's recent release, *Mysterious Star: A Tribute to Poe*, features unique songs crafted from Edgar Allan Poe's stories and poems.

The revolving cast of classically trained musicians is led by composer Thistle Jamison, who toured in the 1990s as a member of cello-rock band Rasputina, and took drum lessons with Sara Landau of Bikini Kill and The Julie Ruin.

For more information, visit bit.ly/759-thistle.

WTSA launches 'Listen Local'

BRATTLEBORO—Brattleboro radio station WTSA 96.7FM is launching a new local music program celebrating the region's musicians and touring bands visiting local venues. *Listen Local* airs weekly on Sunday mornings from 11 a.m. to noon, starting April 7. The program is also available as a recorded podcast at wtsaradio.com/listen-local.

The program features music and interviews with local bands across Vermont, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire, as well as musicians playing at the region's live music venues.

Listen Local is hosted by Mitchell Harrison, owner of Next Chapter Records in Putney. The

one-hour program is supported through sponsorship by Next Stage Arts in Putney; Farm Road Estate Music Festival in West Dover; Retro Music in Keene, New Hampshire; and Guilford Sound in Guilford.

"You've heard the expression 'Think Global, Act Local' — at WTSA, we have a new expression called 'Listen Local,'" said Kelli Corbeil, owner and general manager of Four Seasons Media, which owns WTSA and The Beast 99.5FM. "'Listen Local' sponsors are supporting our thriving local music scene, connecting with both the local community and visitors to the tri-state region through music."

Four Seasons Media itself is a local, independently operated, woman-owned business located on Putney Road in Brattleboro. For more information, contact jros@wtsaradio.com.

Wendy's House Concert series hosts vocal quintet Culomba

GUILFORD—On Friday, April 5, the Boston-based vocal quintet Culomba will appear in Wendy's House Concert series on Tater Lane in Guilford at 7 p.m. Culomba specializes in close harmony singing from many different global styles, including American folk traditions, music from Georgia, Corsica, and the Balkans, renaissance polyphony, and originals.

Culomba's singers have traveled internationally to study with masters of traditional music and have performed at venues such as Club Passim (Cambridge), Jalopy (Brooklyn), Caffè Lena (Saratoga), and the inaugural Songroots Polyphony Festival (Vancouver). Current members include Sophie Michaux, Adam Simon, Lysander Jaffe, Lexi Ugelow, and Daniel Fridley.

Some of these singers

performed in a Palaver Strings performance at the Brattleboro Music Center last month with Fredy Clue, a Swedish nyckelharpa virtuoso.

Brattleboro musician Anna Patton writes of Culomba: "Culomba's performances are stunning! I'm delighted by the complex musical places they go, but it also never feels like complexity for its own sake: I feel simply immersed, carried along by their fearless, full-voiced, and whole-hearted harmonies."

Suggested donation at the door is \$20. Call Wendy Redlinger for information and directions at 802-254-6189.



Palestinian films

FROM SECTION FRONT

Organization (PLO), but Frank says "that's not representative of the Palestinian people as a whole. Palestinians are people with a culture, a history that goes way back — the series isn't intended to change people's minds: It's to open people's minds."

Local Palestinians have been involved in producing the series, and they will also introduce some of the films and lead discussion sessions at the end of each evening.

"Given that these participants are well-versed in Palestinian history and aware of the political dynamic," Frank adds, the hope "is that these will be open forums for respectful and cordial dialogue."

This series of voices and stories about Palestine — and from Palestinian perspectives — includes documentaries, short films, animation, and features, including *The Present*, an Oscar nominee. All of the films are "by and about Palestinians," according to a press release, on topics as varied as "Palestinian agriculture and industry, drama, youth and gender roles, refugees, politics, and diplomacy."

A list of potential choices was compiled by members of SoVT4P, including Nell Koenings, a professor of anthropology at Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts.

Their final choices "best fit the criteria of films that are cinematically engaging and that put human faces on the Palestinian struggle," Frank says.

The theme unifying the April 7 selections is "The Nakba and Its Legacy," and the featured film will be *The Tower*, an animated short about a young girl's search for stories about three generations of her family.

The family members took refuge in Lebanon after they were forced to flee Galilee in 1948 during the Nakba, when a nascent Israel expelled tens of thousands of Palestinians from their homes and villages.

Also screening on April 7 are two documentaries: *Framed: The Politics of Stereotypes in the News*, an animated short about Edward Said's concept of Orientalism and the ways it "perpetuates myths and creates false narratives about people from other cultures," and *The Nakba: How Palestinians Were Expelled from Their Homes*, a recounting of Palestinian history since the Ottoman Empire.

The evening's program will be introduced by Sarah E. Jenkins, professor of animation, creative arts, and visual culture at Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts.

The theme for April 14 is "Secret Negotiations and Palestinian Resistance," which includes *The Oslo Accords: Failure or Betrayal* and *The Wanted*.

April 21 will focus on "Life in Occupied Palestine" with *My Neighborhood, We Teach Life, Dispossession, Shades of Anger, Resistance, Human Rights*, and *The Present*.

The final evening in the series will zero in on "Palestinian Resilience" with *Made in Palestine, Farming Under Fire in Gaza, Return to Seifa Village, Gaza Monologues: A Documentary*, and *Horizon*.

The series is open to all. Frank notes that SoVT4P has reached out to Brattleboro Union High School's Peace Jam, the film studies program at Keene State College, and the Vermont-New Hampshire chapter of Jewish Voice for Peace to encourage attendance.

Admission is by donation, Frank explains. "A lot of the filmmakers are not charging us for their films, and we are paying only a small fee for others. The Latchis is generously providing a space to us with a minimal fee for overhead, and we have support from private donors."

For more on the Palestine Film Series, visit sovt4palestine.org/palestine-film-series.

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Hinsdale, NH Transfer Station Part-Time Operator

The Town of Hinsdale seeks a Transfer Station Part-Time Operator, employment to begin July 1, 2024. The Operator's responsibilities to include the day-to-day operation of the Transfer Station under the direct supervision of the Highway Superintendent. DOT physical required and the ability to obtain Transfer Station Level II Certification. Some technical or mechanical work experience (preferred).

Starting salary range is \$17.70 - \$20.93 based on experience. Operator will work Tuesday - Saturday, 32 hours weekly.

Submit resume with a minimum of 3 references to Kathryn Lynch, Town Administrator, Town of Hinsdale, PO Box 13, 11 Main Street, Hinsdale, NH 03451. Resumes can be dropped off at Selectmen's Office at the Town Hall. Deadline: Until position is filled. EOE. townadmin@hinsdalenh.org

Hinsdale, NH Facilities Maintenance Custodian

The Town of Hinsdale seeks a Facilities Maintenance Custodian, employment to begin July 1, 2024. The worker's responsibilities to include the day-to-day custodial/maintenance tasks as assigned including shoveling sidewalks, watering flower gardens, cleaning restrooms, collecting, and emptying trash and recycling, painting, dusting, cleaning, sweeping, mopping, and waxing floors, vacuuming, carpet shampooing, cleaning, and washing windows, and other general maintenance duties of all Town Buildings. Works under the direct supervision of the Town Administrator. Some technical or mechanical work experience (preferred).

Starting salary range is \$17.70 - \$20.93 based on experience and offers an excellent benefit package. Maintenance/Custodian will work Monday - Friday and some weekends, 40 hours weekly. Submit resume with a minimum of 3 references to Kathryn Lynch, Town Administrator, Town of Hinsdale, PO Box 13, 11 Main Street, Hinsdale, NH 03451.

Resumes can be dropped off at Selectmen's Office at the Town Hall. Deadline: Until position is filled. EOE. townadmin@hinsdalenh.org

Hinsdale, NH Transfer Station Full Time Operator

The Town of Hinsdale seeks a Transfer Station Full Time Operator, employment to begin July 1, 2024. The Operator's responsibilities to include the day-to-day operation of the Transfer Station under the direct supervision of the Highway Superintendent. DOT physical required and the ability to obtain Transfer Station Level II Certification. Some technical or mechanical work experience (preferred).

Starting salary range is \$17.70 - \$20.93 based on experience and offers an excellent benefit package. Position will work Tuesday - Saturday, 40 hours weekly.

Submit resume with a minimum of 3 references to Kathryn Lynch, Town Administrator, Town of Hinsdale, PO Box 13, 11 Main Street, Hinsdale, NH 03451. Resumes can be dropped off at Selectmen's Office at the Town Hall. Deadline: Until position is filled. EOE. townadmin@hinsdalenh.org

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SUNDAY 1:45 & 6:40
MON.-THUR. 4:15 & 6:40

MONKEY MAN R
FRIDAY 4:15 / 6:45 / 9
SATURDAY 2:15 / 6:45 / 9
SUNDAY 2:15 & 6:45
MON.-THUR. 4:15 & 6:45

WICKED LITTLE LETTERS R
FRIDAY 4:15 / 6:35 / 8:30
SATURDAY 2:15 / 6:35 / 8:30
SUNDAY 2:15 & 6:35
MON.-THUR. 4:15 & 6:35

THE FIRST OMEN R
FRIDAY 4:15 / 6:50 / 9
SATURDAY 2 / 6:50 / 9
SUNDAY 2 & 6:50
MON.-THUR. 4:15 & 6:50

PALESTINIAN FILM SERIES:
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(Of course you do! You're from Windham County!)



Got something on your mind? Send contributions to our Letters from Readers section (500 words or fewer strongly recommended) to voices@commonsnews.org; the deadline is Friday to be considered for next week's paper. When space is an issue, we give priority to words that have not yet appeared elsewhere.



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For more information, please contact kate@commonsnews.org



“Schoolgirl Embroidery and the Book of Revelation” by Julia Zanes.

Exhibit by Julia Zanes opens at CX Silver Gallery

BRATTLEBORO—CX Silver Gallery, 814 Western Ave., opens a new exhibition with works from Julia Zanes that will be on display through May 27. An opening reception will be held Saturday, April 6, from 1 to 3 p.m.

“The work here is a selection from several bodies of work made since 2020,” Zanes writes in her artist statement. “The small ones I called ‘Household Objects.’ They were an offshoot of a large body of work I made around 2016 called ‘The Good Eye.’ I was interested in apotropaic art, and I was trying to make a shift from the image to the object.”

She thinks of paintings as magical objects with a specific, household purpose, she says, “that of keeping evil at bay. It struck me as a funny, medieval way of looking at things. I have always liked Grimm’s Fairy Tales, and the fact that the stories were called ‘Household Tales’ when first published was appealing to me.”

About the use of gold (a common object featured in fairy tales) in her paintings, Zane says, “I don’t want to think of [the paintings] as being precious, but rather as ordinary objects we keep around the house, for a purpose beyond decoration. Of course I don’t believe in the magical powers of paintings, but on some level, know it to be true.”

The larger paintings in the exhibit, the more narrative ones, Zanes started when the Covid pandemic began four years ago.

“I gave myself an assignment to include imagery from The Book of Revelation, and also from American schoolgirl embroideries (samplers).” Feeling the End Times spirit was in the ether for a few months, she says, “I was way over my head in thinking that I was about to start painting the ‘Whore of Babylon’ or anything like that, but I did include a few little fiery references.”

The symmetry and the imagery in the embroideries are appealing to Zanes. “I love that they were made by young girls,” she says.

For more information on the exhibit, visit cxsilvergallery.com/juliazanes. The gallery is open Thursdays to Mondays, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Call 802-257-7898, ext. 1, for the latest news.



The UMass Percussion Ensemble will be at the Brattleboro Museum & Art Center on April 14.

UMass Percussion Ensemble returns to BMAC on April 14

BRATTLEBORO—The UMass Percussion Ensemble returns to the Brattleboro Museum & Art Center (BMAC) on Sunday, April 14, at 7 p.m.

Led by percussionist Ayano Kataoka, the Ensemble is made up of graduate and undergraduate percussion students at University of Massachusetts at Amherst. For their performance in Brattleboro, students Robert Grahmann, Philip Hanifin, Clara Montes, and Sejeong Pyo will perform original compositions and arrangements by J.S. Bach, Michael Burritt, John Cage, Jacob Druckman, and Igor Stravinsky. “A contemporary art museum is a wonderful setting for a musical performance,” BMAC

Director Danny Lichtenfeld said in a news release. “The physical precision and grace of the percussionists, the often surprising compositions — it makes for an incredibly satisfying performance.”

Kataoka, the Ensemble’s director, is a percussionist and marimbist “known for her dynamic and elegant technique,” organizers say. A leading proponent of contemporary composition, Kataoka has participated in several consortiums to commission works for solo marimba or chamber ensembles from such composers as Charles Wuorinen, Martin Bresnick, Paul Lansky, and Alejandro Viñao.

She was the first percussionist to be chosen for the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center’s Bowers Program (formerly Chamber Music Society Two), a high-profile residency for emerging artists. Kataoka is currently a professor at UMass-Amherst.

Tickets can be purchased in advance (\$10 general admission, free for BMAC members) at brattleboromuseum.org or at the door (subject to availability), or by calling 802-257-0124, ext. 101.

VIEWPOINT

One year later, solidarity as a community

The only way to address enormous challenges is to come together as we did after the death of Leah Pritchard-Rosin

Brattleboro
APRIL 3 MARKS the first heartwrenching anniversary of the tragic killing of Leah Rosin-Pritchard by one of her clients at Morningside Shelter.

This event hit me particularly hard for a few reasons. I worked at the shelter for five years prior to my present job. I had met Leah on several occasions, and we collaborated actively to support a shared client. And I saw her as a rising star among the younger human services workers who will continue to serve the community for many years. However, out of this tragedy, I saw something beautiful enough to cancel out some of the pain.

LEO SCHIFF is a social worker and activist who has lived in Brattleboro for the past 40 years.

Groundworks paused all operations for a month so their staff could begin to process the sudden and violent loss of their colleague. And the broader human services community stepped up as volunteers to continue their work as needed.

Volunteers staffed the permanent supportive housing sites of the Chalet and Great River Terrace to serve those residents.

■ SEE ONE YEAR LATER, C2



Bouquets of flowers left at the foot of the driveway at Morningside House in Brattleboro in the aftermath of the brutal killing of Leah Rosin-Pritchard, the coordinator of the shelter.

RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT COMMONS FILE PHOTO

VIEWPOINT

Where experience has been the best teacher

At the School for International Training, a small learning community in Vermont continues to reach across the globe after 60 years

Brattleboro
MOST UNIVERSITIES were founded by people who believed in intellectual growth, accumulated knowledge and experience, and who had the means to make it happen. These visionaries were committed to the success of the institutions they created.

Some institutions were established with specific goals. For example, the founders of Dartmouth College wanted to ensure that Native Americans were afforded the opportunity of higher education. With the help of people who devoted time and money, other institutions such as Shaw University and Harper's Ferry sought to provide people of color with college educations. There are many more examples of institutions that were established with a special purpose. Each aimed to foster intellectual development in their students, in addition to their larger goals.

The history of the School for International Training (SIT) is unique. SIT was founded on the belief that experience is the best teacher—a concept later adopted by others and known as “experiential education.” SIT shaped its curriculum around on the idea that students could

BEATRIZ FANTINI is a professor emerita at SIT, where she worked for 50 years. She is a freelance writer and has published short stories in her native Bolivia and in Venezuela. Her husband, Alvino Fantini, is an SIT professor emeritus.

learn much more by gaining firsthand experience in the field, processing and articulating what they learn, and applying those lessons in future endeavors.

This approach is based on a set of values that grew out of the desire to learn about oneself in the same way one learns about our culture and the cultural views of others, and a desire to bring about peace and live together in harmony. Underlying this method are the goals of respecting others, exploring diversity, and moving beyond one's own worldview.

Knowledge of and experience with other peoples and cultures were motivating factors in the mind of SIT's founder, Donald Watt, when he started the Experiment in International Living (now World Learning) in 1932. His experiences provided

■ SEE SIT, C2

VIEWPOINT



SERGEI TOKMAKOV, ESQ./PIXABAY

Psilocybin for the people

Our state can lead the way in decriminalizing mushrooms for psychedelic therapy, helpful for a number of mental health conditions

Brattleboro
IHAD THE PRIVILEGE of watching the Vermont government in action as it considered a bill that aims to remove criminal penalties for possessing, dispensing, or selling psilocybin and to establish a Psychedelic Therapy Advisory Working Group.

Together, a persuasive picture was painted as to why legalization is of timely interest in Vermont; indeed, it illustrates why legalization and regulations are being enacted throughout the United States.

The speed and detailed nuances each state puts into legislation will be interesting to

Lauren Alderfer, PhD, is the author of *Mindful Microdosing: A Guidebook and Journal*, published by Green Writers Press, available on Amazon.

follow. However, there were two fundamental issues that the Green Mountain state seemed to embrace: decriminalization and accessibility.

The benefits of the therapeutic use of psilocybin for mental health conditions such as depression, addiction, existential anxiety around death and other forms of anxiety, and eating

disorders, to name just a few, have seen a growing body of clinical evidence to support its therapeutic use.

The testimony from Dr. Charlie MacLean of the University of Vermont Medical Center presented research that included opinions and input from many stakeholders.

The therapeutic use of psilocybin did not seem to be in dispute; rather, there appeared to be overwhelming support and interest for access to it in Vermont. Like the current legal use of ketamine in medical settings in the state, psilocybin would most likely follow a similar trajectory for therapeutic,

medical use.

That is why the two remaining concerns—decriminalization and accessibility—could set Vermont apart as a leader for the nation. These concerns are not separate from the need to ensure safety.

In fact, safety concerns were highlighted in the second testimony, which was given by the psychedelics scientist Dr. Katherine MacLean (no relation), a Vermont resident and world-renowned advocate for the safe and accessible use of psilocybin.

Not only did she present scientific knowledge based on her

■ SEE MUSHROOMS, C2



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VIEWPOINT

MicroMOO2 will increase transit equity

As the expanded public transportation service shifts the transportation landscape, it will foster economic empowerment for residents

AS A VOLUNTEER with the refugee resettlement agency ECDC, I've witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by low-income families in accessing reliable transportation, particularly in rural areas like southern Vermont.

That's why I'm thrilled to hear about the expansion of the MOOver in Brattleboro to include the MicroMOO2, a free taxi-like service set to launch on April 15. This initiative holds promise in addressing transportation barriers and fostering economic empowerment for residents, including those I volunteer with at ECDC.

The MicroMOO2 service, which will operate from 5 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, is a much-needed addition to Brattleboro's transportation landscape. Its flexible

ISAAC EVANS-FRANTZ serves as the executive director of a national nonpartisan organization that campaigns for U.S. policies to save lives around the world. For more information on the MicroMOO2 and how to access its services, visit moover.com/brattleboro-microtransit. To support new Vermonters as a volunteer with ECDC, email vermontinfo@ecdcs.org or call 802-376-1319.

scheduling and accessibility will be a boon to individuals working late shifts, attending English classes, or engaging in other evening activities.

For families like the one I assist, who are diligently learning English and building new skills, reliable transportation is



COURTESY PHOTO

The MooVER recently expanded its "micro-transit" service to Brattleboro.

indispensable for maintaining employment and accessing essential services.

MOREOVER, THE MicroMOO2 represents a critical investment in our community's economic vitality.

By facilitating easier mobility for residents, this service can spur increased economic activity and workforce participation. It enables individuals to access job opportunities, attend educational programs, and contribute meaningfully to Brattleboro's thriving social fabric.

Transportation equity is a pressing issue that affects

marginalized communities disproportionately. As a member of the executive committee of the Vermont Sierra Club, I've advocated for sustainable and inclusive transportation solutions. The MicroMOO2 aligns with these principles by offering a convenient and environmentally friendly mode of transit that serves the needs of all residents, regardless of income or background.

Since 2022, ECDC has resettled over 290 individuals in southern Vermont, many of whom face transportation barriers upon arrival. For these newcomers, the MicroMOO2

represents more than just a means of getting from point A to point B — it symbolizes inclusion, opportunity and the promise of a brighter future in our community.

I commend the collaborative efforts of Southeast Vermont Transit (SEVT) and the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC) in launching this innovative service. Their commitment to securing funding and ensuring the MicroMOO2's viability underscores the value of partnerships in addressing pressing social challenges.

As we look ahead to the

MicroMOO2's debut, I encourage residents to familiarize themselves with the service and take advantage of its benefits. There's an app for the MicroMOO2 called QRyde, and the MOOver is running training sessions about how to use it on Tuesday, April 9 at 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Let's embrace this opportunity to enhance transportation equity in Brattleboro and build a more inclusive and prosperous community for all.

Together, we can make Brattleboro a model of transportation equity and accessibility for towns across Vermont.

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Here We Are - Simon Renault, Scott Farm, General Manager. Mon 8p, Tues 5:15p, Wed 12:35p, Thurs 9a & 9:15p, Sat 12:15p, Sun 5:15p	Brattleboro Selectboard Mtg. 4/2/24: Tues 6:15p (LIVE.) Thurs 1p, Sun 6p
The World Fusion Show - Ep 175 - The World Fusion Show Sampler #2. Mon 5:30p, Tues 11a, Wed 9:30p, Thurs 6a, Fri 5p, Sat 6:30p, Sun 4:30p	Brattleboro Representative Town Meeting 2024. Tues 10a, Sat 5:15p
BCTV Open Studio - Moover Microtransit Program 3/27/24. Wed 9p, Thurs 6:30a, Fri 5:30p, Sat 6p, Sun 4p	Putney Selectboard Special Mtg. 3/27/24: Mon 6:15p, Tues 6:30a, Wed 12p
Juno Orchestra - Challenge - Chorale on a Theme by Leo Hasser. Tues 11:45a & 4:45p, Wed 6:15a, Sat 11:45a	Newfane Selectboard Mtg. 4/1/24: Wed 6p, Thurs 8:30a, Fri 12p
Perspectives on Trauma - Part 1: Ishmael Asaad. Mon 10a, Tues 8p, Wed 4:35p, Thurs 2:25p, Fri 6a, Sat 5p, Sun 7p	Brattleboro Planning Commission Mtg. 4/1/24: Wed 8:30p, Thurs 6a, Fri 2:30p
Stained Glass Windows of St. Michaels - Week 12: St. John the Apostle. Mon 7a, Tues 3:45p, Wed 11a, Thurs 5p, Fri 10a, Sat 8p, Sun 12:30p	River Valleys Unified School District Board Mtg. 4/1/24: Thurs 6p, Fri 8a, Sat 12p
Heart Rose Club presents Fool and the World 3/8/24. Mon 3:25p, Tues 8:35p, Thurs 9:35a, Fri 12:35p, Sat 2p, Sun 7:35p	Vernon Selectboard Mtg. 4/2/24: Thurs 8:30p, Fri 5:30a, Sat 2:30p
Landmark College Presents - Katherine Aquino, Ph.D. - Feeling Included. Mon 6a, Wed 9a, Thurs 4p, Fri 11a, Sat 9:45a, Sun 8:45p	Dummerston Selectboard Mtg. 4/3/24: Fri 6p, Sat 8:30a, Sun 12p
BCTV Open Studio - Women's Freedom Center 3/19/24. Mon 12:30p, Tues 9a, Wed 3:30p, Thurs 1:15p, Fri 9:30p, Sat 10:45a, Sun 5:55p	Putney Selectboard Mtg. 4/3/24: Fri 8:30p, Sat 6a, Sun 2:30p
Energy Week with George Harvey & Tom Finnell. Mon 9a, Tues 5p, Thurs 11a, Sat 7p	Brattleboro Housing Partnerships Board Mtg. 3/25/24: Mon 5p
Vermontitude - Weekly Episode. Tue 11:30a & 6:30p, Wed 6a, Thu 1p, Sat 12p, Sun 5p	Windham Central Supervisory Union Board and Exec. Comm. Mtg. 3/27/24: Mon 12p
News Block: Reformer News Break. Mon-Fri 12p & 6p BUHS-TV News. Mon-Fri 12:15p & 6:35p	Townshend Town Meeting 2024. Wed 6a
St. Michael's Episcopal Church - Weekly Service. Wed 2p, Sat 7:30a, Sun 11a	Dummerston Town Meeting 2024. Sun 8a
Trinity Lutheran Church - Weekly Service. Wed 10a, Thurs 7a, Sun 5p	Windham Town Meeting 2024. Mon 8:45p
Guilford Community Church - Weekly Service. Wed 6:30a, Fri 8p, Sun 8a	Town Matters - Weekly Episode. Mon 6p, Wed 4:45p, Thurs 11a, Fri 11:30a, Sat 5p
St. Michael's Catholic Church Mass. Tue 6:45a & 2p, Thurs 8p, Sat 4p (LIVE)	The David Pakman Show. Mon 8a, Tue 9a, Wed 5p, Fri 10:30a, Sun 5p

Note: Schedule subject to change.

View full schedule and watch online at brattleborotv.org

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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Mushrooms

FROM SECTION FRONT

years at Johns Hopkins, but she also shared her compelling personal story. Dr. MacLean highlighted how decriminalization would actually help normalize access to medical and legal help, invite more education for young adults to make informed choices, and lessen the stigma of using psilocybin to seek relief from pain and other difficult symptoms, cope with postpartum depression, or attain more well-being, as opposed to accessing psilocybin without any oversight.

With costs soaring up to nearly \$20,000 for treatment in Oregon, one Vermont prerogative was loudly heard: S.114 needs to be inclusive so that

access for all is possible. Access cannot be cost-prohibitive. This is a fundamental ethos of being a Vermonter.

The third testimony, from Kurt White, vice president of community partnerships and outpatient services at the Brattleboro Retreat, echoed these sentiments.

THOUGH PASSING S.114 for therapeutic use and accessibility are easier hurdles to jump than decriminalization, the essence of the bill would dramatically change if decriminalization were excluded.

The testimony presented convincing reasons for decriminalization. What was not

addressed was the fact that the medicalization of psilocybin is a growing trend, and one that removes access for many.

That is because therapeutic use involves a high dose of psilocybin, which is more appropriate in a medical setting. That is very different from microdosing, which involves ingesting a very small amount; the microdoser has no hallucinations and can go about daily tasks as usual.

With millions of Americans microdosing, this would certainly translate to a significant number of Vermonters. These people do not need a medicalized therapeutic model, and decriminalizing psilocybin

embraces access for them as well.

Those testifying found health and well-being — not recreational use — to be the reasons people most often sought out psilocybin.

Vermont can do right for its people by being a leader in this fast-changing landscape where mushrooms — a fungi found in cow dung, and therefore prolific throughout Vermont — can be decriminalized and accessed for better health and well-being.

In other words, this is a clarion call to support Vermonters in their pursuit of more mindful living and greater balance and harmony.

SIT

FROM SECTION FRONT

the stimulus for his approach to learning and education; having traveled and lived in Iraq (Mesopotamia), India and other places, Watt was convinced of the value of learning from experience.

Given these experiences, he went on to create an organization in which participants experienced a home stay abroad with a family in a small town or village. Both the "Experimenters" and the host families received cultural orientation throughout the process.

The key goal of all such exchange programs was to understand people and accept them on their own terms by living with differences and discovering commonalities.

SIT WAS CREATED in 1964, and the institution prepared early Peace Corps volunteers to travel to 36 countries. The founder and first director was Dr. John A. Wallace, an academic from Pennsylvania.

This contributed to the idea

of creating an academic institution that would incorporate all the experiential activities that preceded its founding, despite the fact that Watt was concerned about the school becoming too traditional or "academic." But this model further influenced the design of SIT's programs, and it later became an accredited institution.

For many years, both the Experiment and the School for International Training incorporated similar experience based on these original principles. The letters traditionally placed after one's name upon graduation were an indication of achievement, but for most, experiential learning stood out as a highlight of their education.

Fortunately, many of the programs preserved the original experiential values of field learning and home stays; new trends in education were also followed, sometimes to the detriment of the institution's original goals. Some programs still stick to those initial goals and

resist more traditional academic demands.

Graduate and undergraduate students who experience overseas internships and home stays invariably remember with fondness and nostalgia the value of the time they spent there, and how much they learned about different languages, cultures, perspectives, and worldviews.

AS SIT APPROACHES its 60th anniversary, one wonders how much time during those years was spent informally, face-to-face, people-to-people, in places around the world.

Beyond the number of degrees SIT has granted, this anniversary is about honoring human connections that have taken place across cultures and around the world, and remembering the transformative on-campus experiences of thousands of individuals.

It is a time to celebrate how this place in southern Vermont continues to occupy so much space in our hearts and minds.

One year later

FROM SECTION FRONT

Volunteers conceived and staffed a pop-up Drop-In Center at the Transportation Center. Vouchers were provided for food, and meals were prepared and delivered to newly homeless and vulnerable individuals.

Brooks Memorial Library became a post office for close to a hundred homeless people. Showers were offered at the

Gibson Aiken Center.

Human service workers from other agencies, church people, and unaffiliated community members pitched in variously in many ways I'm sure I'm not even mentioning.

And folks came together for two vigils to gather, mourn and see our way forward, including moving speeches by Jenney Samuelson, secretary of the

Vermont Agency of Human Services, and U.S. Rep. Becca Balint.

BRATTLEBORO AND THE surrounding communities practiced solidarity, something we see so little and need much more of.

We supported our vulnerable populations that face homelessness as well as income and housing insecurity. We supported our sisters and brothers who work for Groundworks every day, taking risks to demonstrate compassion and love-in-action. And we supported one another in our pathway to process, grieve, and grow from this tragedy.

As a community and as a

society, we face enormous challenges. Poverty, want, and inequality surround us.

Worldwide crises, many bearing the fingerprints of the United States, challenge us to support and show solidarity with our fellow beings on the planet. Environmental degradation robs us of much of our hope for the long-term future.

And yet the only possible way to address these issues is to come together as we did after Leah's murder.

We need to "see no stranger." We need to support each other, the most vulnerable, and our families and friends.

When we show solidarity with each other, we build the world in which we hope to live.

There is an alternative to war. It has been with us forever.

—SARGENT SHRIVER

VIEWPOINT

Medicaid cutoffs are 'policy violence'

Thousands in state are staring down crushing medical bills

THIRTY THOUSAND Vermont residents have been cut from Medicaid since April 2023, following a bipartisan federal decision to end pandemic protections for the program.

Following are testimonies shared with the Healthcare is a Human Right campaign: "I'm a single mom who just got kicked off of Medicaid. There is no way I can afford a plan on the exchange."

"Having Medicaid took the load off the many challenges living with chronic illness comes with. I lost Medicaid and the financial burden is now back on me."

"Our 1-year-old was in the first round of people kicked off Medicaid. I want to live in a society where babies are guaranteed health care."

"I'm due to lose my Medicaid while I have cancer."

"I have no control over Type 1 diabetes. It's an autoimmune disorder, and it feels like I'm being punished with a bill just to live."

These statements reflect the consequences of what Bishop William Barber II of the Poor People's Campaign refers to as "policy murder."

OUR HEALTH CARE SYSTEM is inflicting violence on people — millions nationwide and thousands in Vermont — who are living with serious medical issues while facing the added stress of crushing medical bills. At the same time, the rising cost of health insurance is driving up school and town budgets, putting public education at risk.

KAREN SAUNDERS serves as vice president of the Vermont Workers' Center. If you or your family has been cut off from Medicaid or impacted by high health care costs, barriers to getting the care you need, or medical debt, she invites you to attend one of the Healthcare Is a Human Right's upcoming spring tour events to share your story.

On Jan. 12, the same day as a State House rally demanding a halt to the Medicaid cutoffs, Rep. Lori Houghton and Sen. Ruth Hardy introduced legislation to expand Medicaid access and boost reimbursement rates for primary care and other types of treatment.

The Medicaid Expansion Act of 2024, H.721, opened a necessary dialogue on equitable access to health care. It promised, in the words of the sponsors, to "bring the focus back to Vermonters by expanding access to comprehensive health care for thousands of people who are struggling to afford a visit to their doctor."

Yet by the end of February, most of the bill had been watered down to a study, without a provision to analyze the costs and benefits of health care for all.

Why did we have to wait until thousands of people were stripped of their access to health care for legislators to even begin talking about expanding access to Medicaid?

By turning most of H.721 into a study without a clear implementation timeline, policymakers are perpetuating the suffering and insecurity people are experiencing right now

— which will only get worse when the enhanced federal subsidies for Vermont Health Connect premiums expire in 2026.

In 2011, Vermont enacted Act 48, a groundbreaking law that set a path to establish a publicly financed universal health care system. A study commissioned

by Act 48 found that universal health care would raise net incomes for 9 out of 10 Vermont families while securing comprehensive coverage for all residents.

Yet a coordinated campaign of pushback from big business and the health care industry was enough to scare political leaders into reneging on their responsibility to implement the law that the Legislature had passed.

This is the crux of any attempt at substantial health care reform: It requires leaders to summon the political will to confront entrenched ideas and interests, and to stay in the fight through to victory.

THE MEDICAID EXPANSION ACT of 2024 oriented the policy

discussion in the right direction, and it contains an important provision to support low-income elders and people with disabilities.

However, because of the fragmented nature of our health care system, small reforms often just add to the complexity and irrationality of the system as a whole and pit sections of our communities against one another.

Universal health care is the only way out of this policy trap. We need an updated study of the benefits and costs of implementing a universal, publicly financed system, as laid out in Act 48.

THE HEALTHCARE IS A HUMAN RIGHT campaign recently kicked

off a spring tour of community meetings on the health care crisis. Dozens of people came to the first event in Brattleboro, sharing their frustration with navigating a complex system to get the care they need, and the challenges this system creates for both patients and health care workers.

Simply put, people in our communities are going untreated and suffering adverse health consequences, even financial ruin, through no fault of their own.

Policy violence is real. And it's going to take an organized social movement, with the support of committed elected officials, to lead the way to realizing health care as a human right and a public good.

LETTERS

U.S. lawmakers are disconnected from Vermonters

RE: "The lion in winter" [News, March 27]: First off, thanks to Joyce Marcel for writing this article on retired Sen. Patrick Leahy.

While the article made thoughtful mention of our former senator's efforts to secure more funding for local Vermont interests and mitigation of the human tragedy of U.S. mines, napalm and Agent Orange in Vietnam, this remains cold comfort to the many challenges that Vermonters, especially our young people, face today.

We need far more Town Meeting-style gatherings with our two senators and our U.S. representative.

Programmed visits are good for a small group of select people, but the majority of us believe there is a disconnect between the halls of Congress and the small towns and cities of Vermont.

The print media can help in pressing our legislators for more town meetings that allow more voices to be heard and not ignored.

My family would love to attend such an event sponsored by The Commons.

Bill Morse Bellows Falls

We cannot fund our way out of this chaos

How can Rockingham, where I live, or any town in Vermont, continue to carry the unbearable and unsustainable burden of taxes here?

How can our Legislature create and bring new taxes each year to the table off of which we all must eat? It is unconscionable.

How can our local boards knowingly raise the tax rate year after year, hurting our elderly and our working poor still further? It is shameful.

The answer is a lack of due diligence, a lack of care, and an apathy toward their fellow citizens.

As a person who has served on boards in my community and on state committees, I have been present as budgets were proposed, argued, revised, and finalized. I have argued passionately for level funding, or for using the "fat" of previous years' budgets to eliminate the need to raise taxes.

Call it what you want — fat, bloat, padding, building in a margin-of-error buffer, end-of-year unrestricted fund balance — it's there, and some of it comes from building in monies needed for specific line items

that do not get used, or fully realized, in any given tax year.

Budget line items are inflated, whether it's from positions that do not get filled annually (wages and benefits are 70-75% of every budget) or from building in insurance benefits for people they may hire (calculated as a family plan of the highest level, costing the most). Some due to actual costs, yes, but many only as pure speculation. Planning a budget of any kind takes far better forecasting than I, as a citizen of Vermont, have seen.

Our school systems are bloated. Student numbers continue to edge downward annually, yet our cost per pupil continues to sail far past state averages. Again, wages and benefits are around 75% of each year's budget.

Based on the academic anemia of some Vermont school districts, what results do we get for what we pay? Poor reading, spelling, and comprehension skills, to name a few.

Vermont is also in crisis over the failing condition of education's infrastructure and our buildings, yet school boards have kicked the can down the road year after year in favor of higher wages. Students cannot be productive in a building that leaks or is falling down around them.

This is demolition by neglect. School staff must understand that they hold some or most of the best-paid positions in their small towns, far exceeding the wages of the taxpayer who must fund them.

We cannot fund our way out of this chaos. These challenges must be reenvisioned and tackled together. From every level of government, we are drowning in a sea of deficits. Existing citizens are leaving or downsizing, reducing communities' ability to pay.

We must be mad to think we will fill our population ranks with millionaires or refugees ready to pay the exorbitant cost of being a Vermonter. Will the last person leaving the state please turn out the light?

Many historic factors have reduced the population of Vermont to where it is now. Families who have stayed for many generations must rethink their love of the state over the abyss of poverty by taxation.

Budgets are getting voted down. Citizens are sending a clear signal to reduce costs and find more creative ways to get things done.

What are we leaving our children if we cannot afford to live here ourselves?

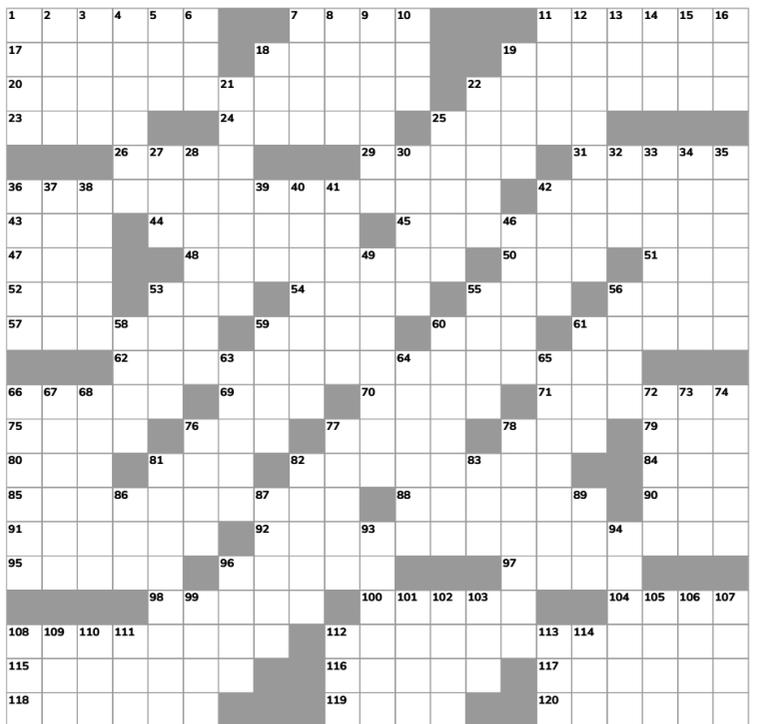
Vermont, take heed. Deborah Wright Rockingham

BRENDAN EMMETT QUIGLEY THE COMMONS CROSSWORD

"It Ain't Over Till The Fat Lady Sings"

Across

- 1. "The Ballad of the Green Berets" singer Barry Berets
7. See 59-Down
11. Start of a quote by 45-Across
17. Emphatic Cannes agreement
18. "The ___ Mutiny Court-Martial"
19. Get tough
20. Quote, part 2
22. Suez Canal city
23. Sign of laryngitis
24. Word with duty, center, and pride
25. Easy targets
26. From the top
29. Amtrak train from Boston
31. Kavanaugh's co-worker
36. Quote, part 3
42. Roofing specialist
43. Classic cold cut
44. Embroidery yarn
45. "Blithe Spirit" playwright
47. Personal account?
48. Takes second against, perhaps
50. Not at home
51. Greta of "The Morning Show"
52. Bireme tool
53. "That hits the spot!"
54. Orthodontist's concern
55. Delivery person?
56. Mononymic rapper from Blackpink



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- 57. Bitcoin, Ethereum, etc.
59. Corp. bigwigs
60. Brown dorm monitors
61. See 36-Down
62. Quote, part 4
66. Rapper/singer/Aut o-Tune abuser
69. Charged item
70. Brother
71. "The Desert Fox"
75. Cloudburst result
76. Economic stat.
77. Sonata finale
78. "Get cracking!"
79. In the style of, in the kitchen
80. Rather bother
81. "That guy's a heel!"
82. It might show the Sea of Tranquility
84. Upholstery problem
85. Quote, part 5
88. Not that big
90. "Snooze" singer
91. It comes between 2023-24
92. Quote, part 6
95. Zeno, notably
96. Panamanian pancake
97. Half of a nibble
z100. Hardly wimpy
104. Comets' paths
108. Dagwood of "Blondie"
112. Quote, part 7
115. Adjustable altitude stabilizer on a plane

- installment
8. Repetitive greeting
9. Like a small-sized garage
10. It's going to leave a mark
11. Dermatologist's concern
12. Gorges
13. Surgery ctrs.
14. "Don't text and drive" spot: Abbr.
15. Island chain?
16. Wrap things up
18. Hollywood special FX
19. Manilow song setting
21. "Treasure Island" illustrator
22. Sign of life
25. Coach Prime's first name
27. Grp. of D.C. advisors
28. Hearing distance
30. Whitewater vessel
32. Bar topic
33. Bit of slanted writing?
34. Chicago Sky coach
Weatherspoon
35. Bit of a challenge
36. 2003-07 Fox teen drama set in 61-Across
37. Comics viking
38. Atlanta university
39. Have to pay back
40. White legume
41. "Billy ___" (movie and musical)

- 42. The worst of the worst
46. Needing some tightening up
49. Apostle known as "the Zealot"
53. Many, many
55. Hide
56. Start of many threads
58. 1957 Nabokov novel about a professor
59. With 7-Across, stolen car garage
60. Don't stop
61. Stuff overhead
63. Lady left behind
64. So far
65. Pays a visit

- 66. "Survivor" teams
67. Au pair's boss
68. Japanese martial art
72. Quagmire
73. Bennet of "Pride and Prejudice"
74. Wash against, as the shore
76. "Fetch me a fainting couch"
77. Killer comedian
78. Microscopic machine
81. Cookies with cappuccino
82. Procrastinator's word
83. Reached, as a goal
86. ___ chi ch'uan
87. Took on
89. Up to now
93. His strength was under locks
94. Shred
96. Starbucks employer
99. Milk source
101. Not straight
102. Cereal served in party mixes
103. Takes in
105. Boxer's wear
106. "Your guide to a better future" website
107. Certain NCO's
108. "Incidentally," in texts
109. Sch. with campuses in Narragansett and Providence
110. Sch. on the Charles
111. "I can't believe this," in texts
112. Online cousin of "just saying"
113. Dictionary abbr.
114. Pay court to

Last issue's solution

"Eat Your Fill"



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Advertisement for Brattleboro Tire featuring a tire image, text: 'Locally owned for over 46 years!', 'TIRES & ALL UNDER CAR SERVICE', 'Oil Change \$74.95', 'FULL SYNTHETIC UP TO 5 QTS.', 'INCLUDES 30 POINT COURTESY CHECK Fluids • Belts • Hoses • Steering • Brakes', 'Schedule your preventative maintenance for March and get 10% OFF', 'VT State Inspections • Courtesy cars or rides available at no cost'

COLUMN | *Sports Roundup*

Unified basketball kicks off spring sports season

Practices began last week for spring high school sports in Vermont. Weather permitting, some teams will have their first games later this week.

Meanwhile, Unified basketball got started on April 1 when the Brattleboro Bears traveled to Springfield to face the Cosmos in Dressel Gymnasium.

Unified basketball, which is run through Special Olympics Vermont, is an all-gender-inclusive program that pairs athletes who may have disabilities with partners who do not have disabilities. At any given time, there are three athletes on the floor with two partners. According to Vermont rules, the partners are not allowed to shoot the ball, leaving all the scoring opportunities for the athletes.

The Bears have seven games on the regular season schedule this year. The home opener is April 4 against Twin Valley, which is fielding a Unified team for the first time this season. There is another home game on April 9 against Burr & Burton. As was the case last year, home games at the BUHS gym will start at 2:15 p.m., so that students can watch most of the games before they go home for the day.

Brattleboro then has a pair of road games at Twin Valley on April 11 and Otter Valley on April 30 before returning to the BUHS gym for a May 3 game with Rutland. The regular season ends with a May 8 game in Bennington against Mount Anthony.

Last year, the Bears made it to the state semifinals before being eliminated by Burr & Burton in the Southern Division championship game. Burr & Burton will be aiming for its third straight Southern Division title, but the Bears may have enough talent to prevent a “three-peat” by the Bulldogs.

The Bears lost Joanie Tuttle, Janessa Jones, Timothy Galdamez, Marcy Galdamez, Silvia Galdamez, and Alana Bell to graduation last year. Most of the key players from last year’s team are back.

Tyler Boone returns for his seventh season coaching Unified basketball. Boone is a big believer in Unified sports, and what it means for BUHS.

“Kids are staying in school because of Unified,” he said last year. “Kids are catching up with their work because of Unified. It’s making a real difference in the school community and the school culture.”

Boone is also excited that Twin Valley has a Unified basketball team this season, and helped that school get its program started.

Allison Kelley and Andy Oyer are the co-coaches for the Wildcats, with assistance from Seth McCoard and varsity boys’ basketball coach Chris Brown. Twin Valley opened its season against Burr & Burton on April 1.

Busy spring ahead for local schools

• Brattleboro opens its baseball season on April 12 in Townshend against Leland & Gray. The Bears will host Mount Anthony at Tenney Field for the home opener on April 15.



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.

The Bears will open the softball season against Northampton, Massachusetts on April 12, and will be at Sawyer Field to face Mount Anthony in the home opener on April 15.

The girls’ lacrosse team begins its season on the road with games on April 9 in Northampton, April 13 in Keene, New Hampshire, and April 17 in Woodstock before the Bears have their first home game on April 19 at Natowich Field against Rutland.

The boys’ lacrosse team also opens its season with five road games: in Rutland on April 16, in Manchester against Burr & Burton on April 18, at Stratton Mountain School on April 29, in Northampton on May 1 and in Bennington against Mount Anthony on May 3 before the Bears play their first game at Natowich Field on May 6 against Rutland.

The boys’ tennis team opens the season at Hartford on April 15. The Bears will then hibernate for two weeks before their home opener against Mount Anthony April 29 at the BUHS courts.

The girls’ tennis team opens at home on April 12 with a doubleheader against Bellows Falls at the BUHS courts, while the track team has its first home meet on April 16 at the Freeman Track. The Ultimate disc team gets its season started on May 2 when it hosts Mill River.

• The Bellows Falls baseball and softball teams open their season on April 9 with a road trip to Fair Haven. The track & field team also has its first meet that day at Hadley Field.

The Terriers’ home baseball opener is April 13 against Rutland, while the softball team has its home opener on April 20 against Hartford.

The girls’ tennis team opens their season on April 10 in Manchester against Burr & Burton. With the courts at Hadley Field still awaiting repairs, the Terriers will once again play on the road for all their matches.

• Leland & Gray begins its softball season on April 10 in Dorset against Long Trail School, then has two more road games at Woodstock on April 20 and at Mill River on April 23 before the Rebels have their home opener on April 25 against White River Valley.

The Ultimate disc team opens its season at home on April 29 against Burr & Burton, while the track & field team has its first meet at Bellows Falls on April 9.

• The Twin Valley baseball team opens its season with three road games — at Poultney on April 9, at Mill River on April 13, and at Rivendell on April 16 — before the Wildcats host Leland & Gray on May 1. The softball team begins



He has not indicated whether he will be wearing his lucky shorts, but Brattleboro Unified basketball coach Tyler Boone hopes the Bears will clean up the competition this season.

the season on the road with games at Arlington on April 15 and Mill River on April 29 before they host Leland & Gray on May 1. The track team opens the season in Brattleboro on April 16 at a multi-team meet with Arlington, Green Mountain, Bellows Falls, Woodstock, and Burr & Burton.

No softball at Green Mountain this season

• Competition from other spring sports such as Ultimate disc, track & field, lacrosse, and tennis has put a dent in baseball and softball programs around Vermont, but I was surprised to hear that Green Mountain Union High School in Chester won’t have a softball team this season.

According to a report in the *Rutland Herald* last week, Green Mountain’s softball program did not have enough players to field a team. Fortunately for the GM students who still want to play softball, the Vermont Principals’ Association’s member-to-member program allows up to four players to compete at a neighboring school if their own school doesn’t offer a particular sport.

According to the *Herald*, GM Athletic Director Todd Parah said Springfield High School should be able to accommodate everyone at GM who wants to make the commitment to play for the Cosmos this season.

Green Mountain has had some good softball teams over the years. This might be just a temporary blip, but it could be another example of what is happening at small schools around Vermont with declining enrollments and resources.

Green Street School celebrates centennial with 12th annual Tulip Trot

• On Saturday, May 4, Green Street School in Brattleboro presents the 12th annual Tulip Trot 5K Run & Walk.

This is a family friendly, non-professional fundraising event

that is open to the community. Organized by the Green Street School PTO, it’s the school’s biggest yearly fundraiser. Proceeds from the Tulip Trot are used for school-wide and grade-level enrichment programs, field trips, winter sports, and staff appreciation activities.

This year, the Tulip Trot will also be celebrating Green Street School’s 100th birthday. The event will have food available for purchase, raffle prizes, and birthday cake.

A special Tulip Trot merchandise store is open until April 12. Buy your Tulip Trot shirts at tuliptrot24.itemorder.com/shop/home. A limited number of shirts will be for sale the day of the event. More details on the race, including registration information, can be found at sites.google.com/wsesdvt.org/tulip-trot/home.

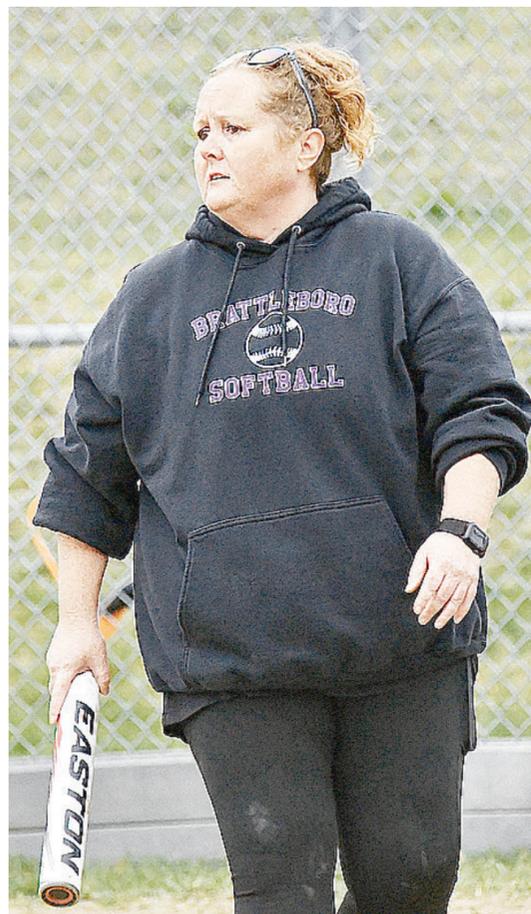
Grace Cottage’s family-friendly 5K is May 11

The 15th annual Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital’s Spring into Health 5K is scheduled for Saturday, May 11, on the Townshend Common. You can run, walk, roll, stroll, or push your baby carriage for this fun, family-friendly event. The event begins with an 8:30 a.m. shotgun start.

Registration is \$20 per participant (children ages 17 and under are free with signed parent/guardian permission) and registration is open now at gracecottage.org/events. A virtual option is also available. Register at the same link. For more information, email info@gracecottage.org or call 802-365-9109. All proceeds from this event will benefit healthcare services at Grace Cottage.

Senior bowling roundup

• Week 13 of the winter/spring season of the Brattleboro Senior Bowling League at Brattleboro Bowl on March 28 saw little change in the standings. First place High Rollers (43-22) had a 5-0 week, while Stepping Stones II (40-25) also



Brattleboro varsity softball coach Erin Cooke is back at the helm this season. The Bears open their season on April 12 in Northampton, Massachusetts.

went 5-0 to move into second place, followed by Stayin’ Alive (36-29), Four Seasons (32-33), Good Times (27-38), Four Pins (27-38), Hairiers (23-42), and Slow Movers (20-45).

Diane Cooke had the women’s high handicap game (235) and series (637) while Al Dascomb had the men’s high handicap game (257) and Duane Schillemat had the high handicap series (686). Slow Movers had the high team handicap game (863), while Four Pins had the high handicap series (2,466).

John Walker had the men’s

high scratch series (576) with games of 211 and 204. Peter Deyo had a 556 series with a 209 game, Schillemat had a 551 series with games of 190 and 200, Milt Sherman had a 540 series with a 191 game, and Robert Rigby had a 518 series. Those with notable games included Gary Montgomery (192), Charlie Marchant (191), and Dascomb (190).

Cooke had the women’s high scratch series (451), while Nancy Dalzell had the high scratch game (174). Cooke had a 173 game and Carol Gloski rolled a 164.

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